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DECEMBER 1991

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by Charles Dickens

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# G R E A T   E X P E C T A T I O N S

## January's Jumping

*Events not to miss next month*

Glenda Dickerson has long collected images of Aunt Jemima, using the now-scorned figure, she says, "as a means of exploring what frightens us about being black women." When Dickerson and her collaborator Breena Clarke began to talk about using Jemima as the focus of a new play, the initial reaction from friends and colleagues was "fear and outrage, and 'can't you take that head rag off?' So we knew we were getting somewhere!" **Re/Membering Aunt Jemima (An Act of Magic)**, Dickerson and Clarke's audaciously deconstructive minstrel show, will premiere next month at the Lorraine Hansberry Theater.

Speaking from her home in Philadelphia, where she is head of the theater department at Rutgers University, Dickerson explained that she had been looking for a "way to honor the secret voices of our foremothers. Breena and I have worked together for a long time in theater; our interest is not in kitchen sink drama but in bringing alive the lost voices. We started this project to build an icon in strictly African American images, but we kept floundering.

"We had the material, the words of black women under seige, from slave narratives and other sources. One of the most heart-rending things is a letter written to the NAACP by the actual woman who last posed as Aunt Jemima, when the NAACP was denouncing the use of the image. But something was hollow, something was missing. I realized that Aunt Jemima had to be at the center, and so we moved her back."

Organized as a minstrel show, with its traditional Intro, Oleo, and Walkaround segments, the show has some important

differences from the old variety show: "For one thing we're calling it 'The Aunt Jemima Traveling *Menstrual* Show,'" Dickerson said, spelling it out. "It will involve first the dis-membering of Aunt



Jemima; the stories and skits will be clustered around her body sections and all involve actual incidents of violence against women. Then, finally, we will celebrate and rebuild her."

Dickerson has not seen, but knows about, "Ethnic Notions," Jan Faulkner's horrifying and revelatory exhibition of images of black caricatures. Faulkner, an

Oakland woman, has collected a huge assortment of objects ranging from cartoons to household implements and washing-soda boxes depicting grinning black mamies, Little Black Sambos, the once ubiquitous ersatz hitching posts in the form of little black grooms, and other bits of racist kitsch that not long ago were quite pervasive. Shown in 1982 at the Berkeley Art Center, and later the inspiration for a documentary film by Marlon Riggs, Faulkner's collection remains a painful, head-on confrontation with the casual stereotyping and degradation of black men and women.

It is the aim of Dickerson and Clarke to go straight through the masks and make visible the pride and strength, the true joys and real salt tears of Aunt Jemima and all her silenced sisters. *Opening January 22 at the Lorraine Hansberry Theatre, 500 Sutter Street. (415) 433-9116.*

### PARADISE FOUND

Although the prophet Mohammed abhorred idolatry and removed all pagan idols and most painted murals from Mecca's ancient Arabic sanctuary, the Kaaba, there is nonetheless a significant tradition of representational painting in Islamic art. While the great accomplishments of Islamic cultures were architectural, there are richly illuminated manuscripts, dating from the thirteenth century and depicting religious themes. And in the hands of Islamic artists, abstract designs became potent symbolic references. **The Here and the Hereafter: Images of Paradise in Islamic Art**, an exhibition of approximately fifty objects drawn chiefly from American collections

Above: In a Paradise Garden, Turkey, late 16th century. Part of The Here and Hereafter: Images of Paradise in Islamic Art exhibit at the University Art Museum, Berkeley.

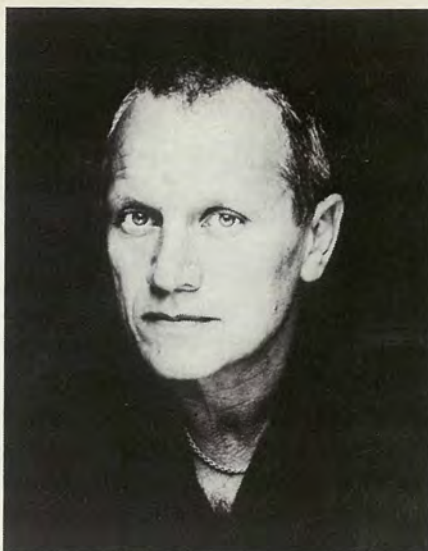
by Kate Regan Eaton



comes to the University Art Museum at Berkeley in an installation designed by the architect Charles Moore and inspired by Islamic architecture.

The objection to realistic imitations of life was twofold: an aversion to idols and a sense that artists should not presume to compete with God, the only true creator of living things. Therefore Islamic artists evolved elaborate abstractions to symbolize Paradise. The exhibition thus includes richly ornamented objects such as mosque lamps, prayer rugs, tiles, metal and glass vessels, banners and other fabrics which make metaphorical allusion to the concept of Paradise. Many of these abstractions have an extraordinary emotional intensity: While Islam's sacred book, the Koran was never illustrated, flame-like calligraphic inscriptions reveal the force of the word.

The Islamic afterlife admits many of the pleasures of earthly existence, and Islamic royal palaces and surrounding gardens were frequently planned as representations of paradise. Thus, in the representational miniatures that do exist, the painted luxuries of courtly life were a promise to the faithful of the happiness to come. Walter B. Denny, curator of the exhibition and a specialist in Islamic art, has organized these images into four sections: Paradise and the Word, Paradise



Steven Berkoff is the author of *Greek* at the Magic Theatre in January.

Described, Paradise Symbolized and Paradise Attained. Each develops the ways in which artists and craftsmen focused on the promise and achievement of a heavenly life, available to any true Muslim who has obeyed the religious codes and duties required on earth. *January 22-March 29 at the University Art Museum, University of California at Berkeley. (510) 642-0808.*

#### GREEK TO ME

A different deconstruction is at work in Steven Berkoff's *Greek*, a reconsideration

of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. *Greek* is Magic Theatre's January offering and will be co-produced by Industrial Strength Productions, the splendid team that brought us last year's *East*, Berkoff's savagely beautiful look at life in East London.

Industrial Strength consists of the actors Joel Mullennix, Delia MacDougall (both had major parts in *East*), and Nancy Shelby, who produced *East* in its original South of Market performances. A series of stark and physically charged vignettes in which Berkoff's characters plunge into torrents of language combining common cliches, Cockney slang, and Shakespearean cadences, *East* met with such success that the company is still catching up to it. After moving to the On Broadway Theater in 1990, it went on to the Magic in 1991 and then to a well-received New York production.

The idea of Industrial Strength, Shelby explained in a recent interview with all three members, was to reverse the usual process of dramatic production: "We, the actors, had the play, the cast and the producers and we interviewed the director instead of the other way round." It worked so well for *East* that the company is in the process of incorporating as a non-profit theater group. As Delia MacDougall put it, "in the established theaters, there were no opportunities for us; so



Peter Donat is back in A.C.T.'s production of Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac* at Theatre on the Square in January. The actor is seen here in the 1972 production.





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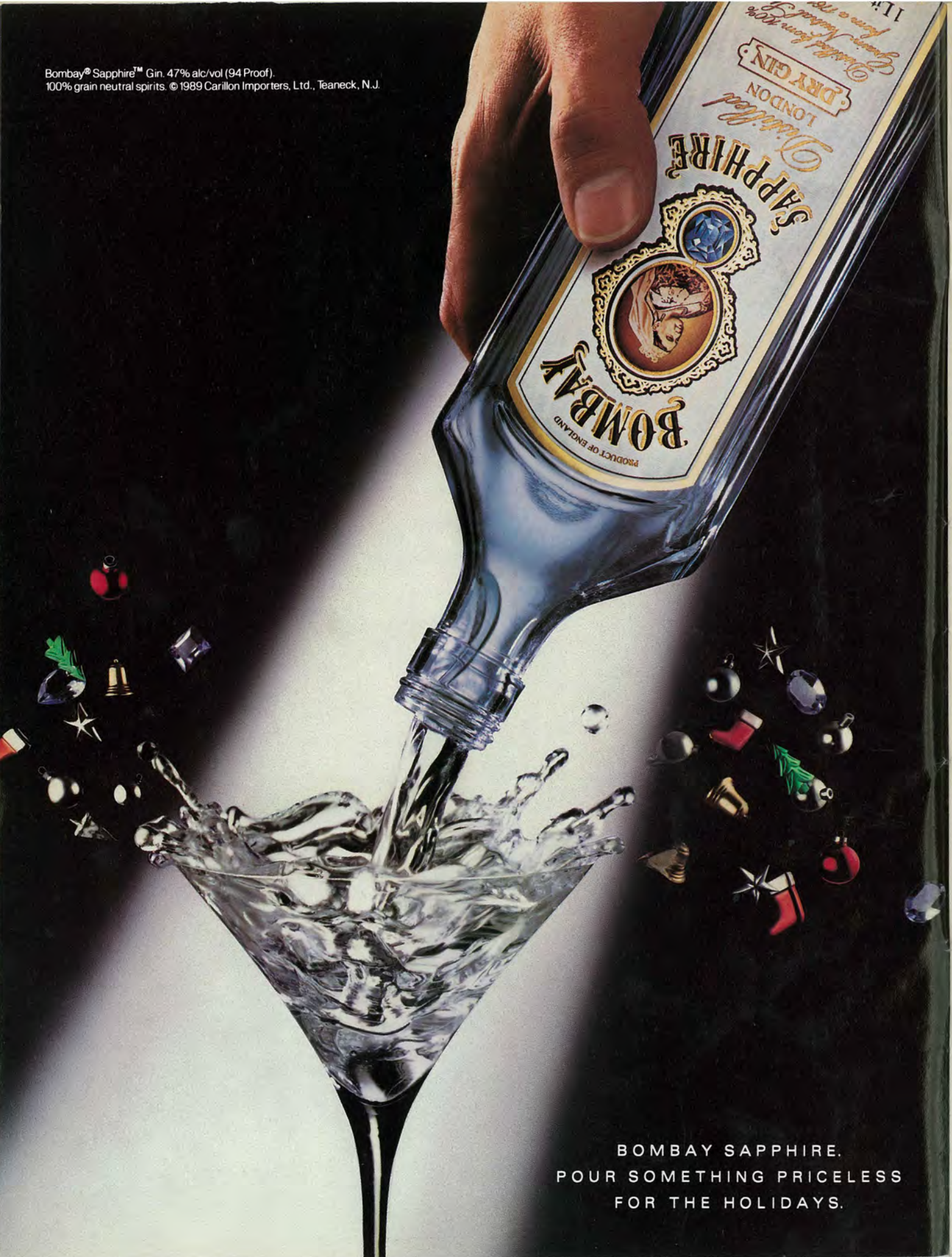
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# California's Diverse Creative Forces

*Eclecticism is king in the various dramatic outpourings from the Golden State*

Trying to define California is like trying to catch a tumbling spark in a hot Santa Ana wind. No easy task, chasing something so elusive and mutable.

California's iridescent mix of fact and mythical fancy has always made it a hard place to figure. And the gale-force pace of economic, social, and cultural change now blowing across the Golden State doesn't make the job any easier.

Nor is it a very simple task getting a fix on those writers who dramatize life in this dynamic environment which today attracts so much national and global attention.

Like the state itself, the work produced by California playwrights is dauntingly eclectic in style and content. A random tour might start with the political theatrics of the San Francisco Mime Troupe and perhaps Bay Area neighbor George Coates's theater-of-images.

Moving along, one finds a writer like Anthony Clarvoe exploring life in microchip-rich Silicon Valley. And in the sleepy town of San Juan Bautista there's the reverberating voice of Mime Troupe alumnus Luis Valdez and his legendary Teatro Campesino.

Los Angeles is home base for the alienated yearnings of John Stepping and other playwrights shaped by the influential outdoor Padua Hills Playwrights Festival. Amid Los Angeles's sprawl can also be found the controversial Reza Abdoh,

*Jeff Rubio writes about theater for the Orange County Register and other publications, including American Theatre.*

whose work blends a scathing political sense with frenzied, avant-garde imagery.

Meanwhile, south to theatrically rich San Diego and back up again, one finds



growing numbers of unique playwrights reflecting the emergence of California's Asian and Hispanic communities: such dramatists as Octavio Solis, Jose Rivera, Milcha Sanchez-Scott, and Eduardo Machado; David Henry Hwang, Velina Hasu Houston, and Philip Kan Gotanda.

"When it comes to play writing, every-

thing represented in the United States is represented in California," says Oskar Eustis, a resident director at the Mark Taper Forum who heads the new play development for the theater.

Looking beyond the diversity, however, Eustis and others close to California's new play output see among the state's dramatists features that are distinctly related to the experience of living here. They see writing marked by restlessness, a sense of searching, and of possibilities, often the result of Californians' disengagement from the rigid traditions and standards upheld by more established societies.

Shaped by the lonely enterprise of immigration, and often in pursuit of personal dreams, there is a marked introspection among many of these writers, some observe. But such inwardness, however pervasive, certainly hasn't prevented clear expressions of criticism and concern for a California speeding away from the simpler past of open arroyos, toward the sprawling complexities of an uncertain future.

If immigration is the source of California's diversity, the experience of transplanting oneself from elsewhere is also one over which much California play writing unites, says Mark Hufflund, play development associate at San Diego's Old Globe Theatre.

"From William Saroyan to Sam Shepard to Velina Hasu Houston, California plays largely are migration plays," Hufflund says.

"Hand in hand with that, in many cases, is a sense of impermanence. The work of Sam Shepard, who has influenced so many California playwrights, is a good

Top: Cathy Thomas-Grant and Alden Fletcher in Jane Anderson's *Food and Shelter* at San Francisco's A.C.T. Above: Jennifer Savidge, Freda Foh Shen, and Tara Marchant in Velina Hasu Houston's *Necessities* at the Old Globe Theatre.

by Jeff Rubio



example, where the family may have had the farm for one generation, and what their future holds is uncertain.

"It's very different from plays from older parts of the country, where the families often are much more settled in."

John Glore, literary manager for South Coast Repertory Theatre in Costa Mesa, concurs with Hufflund.

"The California experience is largely the experience of coming from somewhere else to look for something, and there's a sense of being uprooted that comes from having forsaken traditions in coming here.

"These things inevitably filter into much of the drama here."

Glore cites the theme of displacement in the work of such writers as Philip Kan Gotanda, the Japanese-American author of *Yankee Dawg You Die*, *The Wash* and other plays examining cultural identity.

"Gotanda writes from the specific reference point of people who come from a very old culture to one that doesn't have much sense of tradition," says Glore.

"California can be very exciting, but can also be a very shifting foundation on which to land."

Glore and Jerry Patch oversee South Coast Repertory's California Playwrights Competition, which solicits new plays from state residents and culminates with the annual California Festival — or "Cal-Fest" — of staged readings and full productions of plays by writers living here.

Patch, South Coast Repertory's dramaturg, emphasizes what he sees as a distinctly Californian orientation toward the future, forged by geographic and philosophical breaks with the past. "The absence of a strong sense of tradition causes California writers to look forward."

"The plays tend to be about possibilities. *The Iceman Cometh* is not a California play," Patch says of Eugene O'Neill's pessimistic classic, to make his comparison. "*Abundance*, is closer to the mark," he says. Penned by *Crimes of the Heart* author Beth Henley, a longtime California resident commonly linked to her native South, the play emerged through "CalFest" three years ago and followed two mail order brides hopeful for good fortunes out West.

"Beth wasn't exactly cheery in the

play," Patch says. "But she believed in the friendship of those women, and there was the feeling at the end that they might come closer to their dream.

"That ray of hope is typically not the kind of sense you see coming out of writers working on the East Coast these days."

"Writers who come out here tend to be a little more — if not optimistic — more upbeat."

Los Angeles-based playwright Jane Anderson, a San Francisco native who spent seven years in New York, agrees.

"Many people on the East Coast tend to be more skeptical about life; they've been there for a couple of hundred years, and they've seen it all.

"But it's especially tough trying to survive as a theater artist in a place like New



Beth Henley's *Abundance* was part of South Coast Repertory's CalFest.

York right now. People come out here for a new start; and they often bring a sense of fresh possibilities."

That's what Japan-born, Kansas-raised playwright Velina Hasu Houston sought when she ventured West to California.

Houston's Japanese mother and African/Native-American father met in Tokyo during World War II. *Tea*, her best-known play, chronicled her mother's experiences starting a new life in a small Kansas army town.

"I came to California because I wanted to escape the closed-mindedness of the Midwest. Politically and artistically, I found the ability to express myself more freely because of the openness of the California environment.

"I like the fact that I can write a play

like *Tea* which is very lyrical and stylistic, and then turn around and write the quote-unquote 'well-made' play like *Necessities*, (the latter, her latest play, was produced at San Diego's Old Globe last summer).

"It's exciting that out here we can go from someone like John Stepping, to more lyrical writers like myself, and to someone like Reza Abdoh."

The latter's play, *Bogeyman*, was produced in September at the adventurous Los Angeles Theatre Center which closed in October due to fiscal difficulties. In it Abdoh employed frank depictions of sexual violence and a dizzying, collage-like style to explore the breakdown of the family, the specter of AIDS and social intolerance.

Indeed, the freedom and open-mindedness that many see as fundamental to California play writing doesn't inevitably translate into serenity.

"If you're intense and observant, as a serious writer should be, your optimism is tendered with a very gritty and frank acceptance of the realities of life," Houston says.

"You can't go out and write a play about daisies when you see a man sleeping on the sidewalk with sores on his feet."

Playwright Murray Mednick, founder of Los Angeles's Padua Hills Playwrights Festival, puts it another way. "A land of dreams is often a land of fantasies. To deal with a real world is what a real artist is obligated to do on some level."

Californians' inclination to criticize their environment can even employ some of the state's most archetypal institutions, a practice associated with Sam Shepard, with his deconstructions of Old West myths.

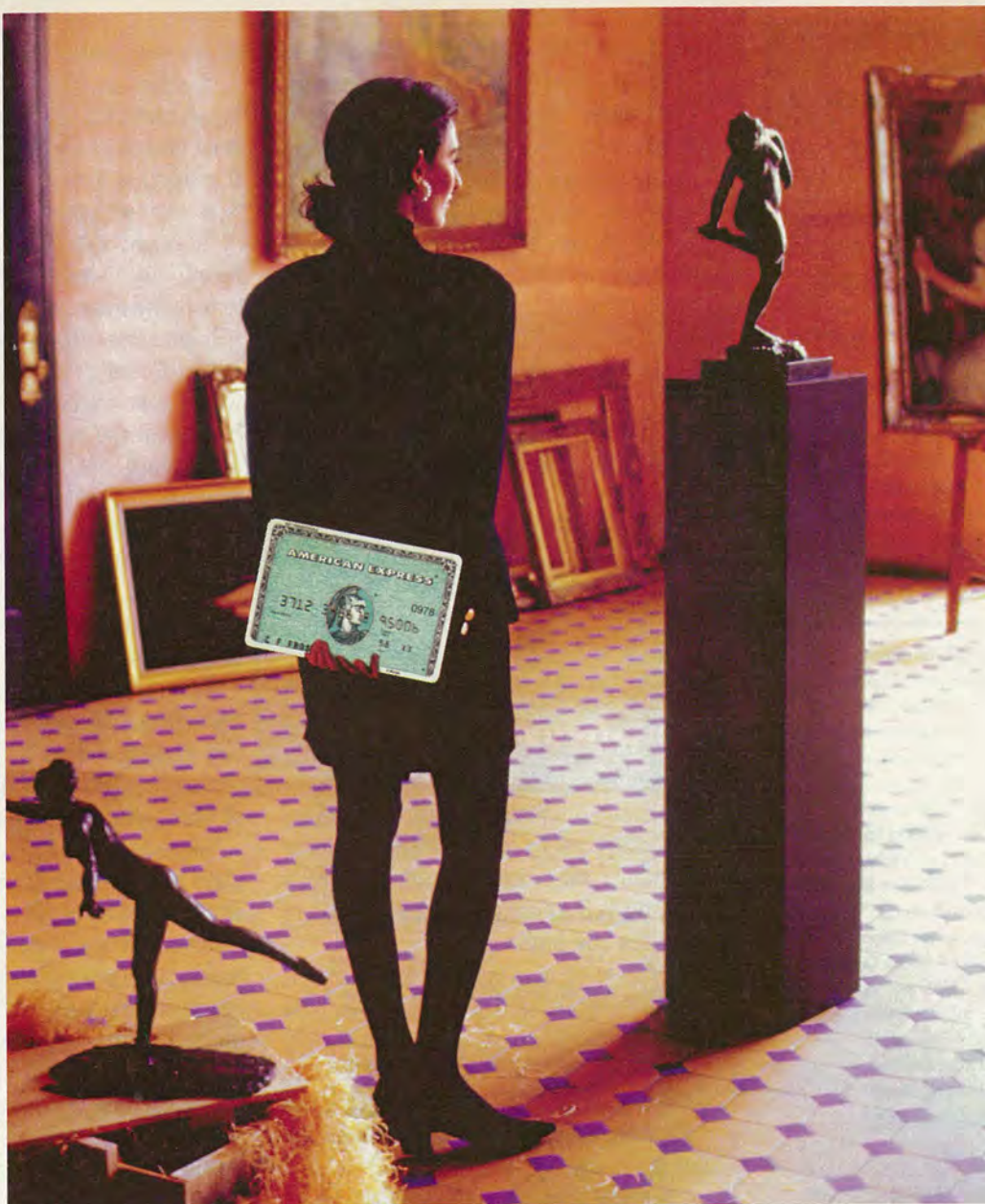
More recently, in *Food and Shelter*, seen last year at San Francisco's American Conservatory Theatre, playwright Jane Anderson made Disneyland the last resort for a homeless family, who prolong their visit by camping out for the night on Tom Sawyer's Island.

Hollywood-born John Stepping took on the golden myth of the California surfer in his drama *The Shaper*, about an ex-king-of-the-waves going off the deep end.

Marlane Meyer, a San Pedro native — who recently reversed a trend by defect-



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THE FINE ARTS MUSEUMS  
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ing to New York — targeted the underbelly of Hollywood in such plays as *Etta Jenks*, her drama about Los Angeles's porn industry that was produced several years ago at the Los Angeles Theatre Center.

Besides an empathy for characters living on Los Angeles's sludgy fringes, Stepling and Meyer share an association with Padua.

Founded in 1978 by playwright Murray Mednick (best known for his experimental work, *The Coyote Cycle*), the annual series of play writing workshops leading to its outdoor festival has been spiritual home to some of California's most unique and innovative theatrical voices.

The first gathering numbered Mednick, Sam Shepard, and noted playwright Maria Irene Fornes. Alumni include — besides Stepling and Meyer — David Henry Hwang (who went on to write *M. Butterfly*) Eduardo Machado (*Burning Beach* and *Stevie Wants to Play the Blues*) and John O'Keefe (*Shimmer*).

If California really is what Joan Didion described as "a place where a boom mentality and a deep sense of Chekhovian loss meet in uneasy suspension," Padua stresses the latter.

"The work here is marked by a search for some sort of spiritual value," says New York native Mednick, a product of New York's Off-Off-Broadway scene of the late 1960s and early 1970s. "Then there's the flip side, which shows the complete lack of it."

A West Coast facsimile of East Coast grumpiness? Oskar Eustis, who spent the mid-1970s working in New York, says no.

"You could say some California writers' disenchantment with aspects of the California Dream belongs to an older theme of disappointment with the American Dream seen in a play like *Death of a Salesman*.

"But there is something very distinctive about the tone of Californians' criticism that has to do with things that are unique to this place: a grappling with an absence of roots or displacement in history. You clearly see that tone in the writers coming out of Padua."

Robert Blacker, associate director and dramaturg for San Diego's La Jolla Playhouse, says California dramatists' willingness to face hard personal and social

issues is a healthy and necessary thing.

"California's playwrights are confronting the fact that the American Dream has been pushed to the West Coast. The frontier that has always been there is gone. Now they're asking, what's next?"

"It might not be optimism, but it's potentially more productive than [contemplating irrevocable failure], California's still got some time on its side. It's a lot easier to be a thirty year-old asking what's gone wrong than a sixty year-old. You can make some adjustments."

Certainly, not everyone in California is interested in the noble pursuits of artistic exploration, theater professionals readily acknowledge. Plenty of writers here would just as soon conform to the more predictable rhythms and patterns of Hollywood.

Mame Hunt, who has served as literary manager for both the Berkeley Repertory Theatre and the Los Angeles Theatre Center, sees this as the distinct down side of play writing in the state.

"More people out here are apt to write plays that essentially are sitcoms or TV drama than back East," she says.

Joy Carlin, associate artistic director at American Conservatory Theatre who oversees the theater's Plays In Progress program, says hopefuls send plenty of television writing to her desk.

"We get a lot of sitcom plays set in Los Angeles. I also get a lot of plays from actual television writers who want to write for the theater.

"Some of them are great at writing TV screenplays, but they'll have this script with a serious theme. This is their 'play.' It's 'different,' they believe. But most of the time it isn't."

South Coast Repertory's John Glore says the Orange County theater's annual call for new plays also results in more than a few submissions of scripts better suited to media other than theater.

"Hollywood inevitably casts its shadow over a fair amount of the writing done in the state, especially in Los Angeles, where people would like to parlay a script into a career in film and television.

"We're (South Coast Repertory) far enough from Los Angeles that most writers think of us as a place for theater, but a lot of the plays submitted to us



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The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco  
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This exhibition has been made possible by generous grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, a Federal agency; the Trust for Mutual Understanding; The Golden Grain Company; and Louisa Stude Sarofim. Additional support was provided by the Franklin Group of Funds and the Grand Hyatt of San Francisco.



by lesser writers are very much in the Hollywood vernacular."

Hunt believes it's often more than a matter of Californians prospecting for Hollywood riches.

"It's not so much that these people are aspiring for Hollywood. It's what the culture encourages, sort of the shadow part of the zeitgeist."

Eustis, however, suggests that, in a negative way, the presence of Hollywood serves a useful purpose for serious theater artists in the state, by providing a standard of how *not* to make theater.

"Back East there have been very definite models for making theater. First there was the European — especially the English — model, and then Broadway," says the director, who worked in the New York theater community in the mid-1970s, and ran San Francisco's Eureka Theatre before coming to the Mark Taper Forum.

"California theater doesn't have those reference points, but we do have film and television. It's the rock against which we break. We constantly have to ask ourselves: what is it we do that is undoable in the television and electronic medium.

"What we return to again and again is that theater is a communal event that takes place in real time with other people."

Some see California's willingness to challenge the traditional venue of theater, or to let necessity dictate where a play will be performed as another significant aspect of creating drama in the state.

Besides Padua, they point to the early work of Luis Valdez's Teatro Campesino, which employed the back of a large flat-bed truck to stage its "actos," short plays dramatizing the plight of California's migrant farm workers, who formed both the audience and the actors.

"The folks at Padua don't sit around with an empty Shubert in front of them," says Eustis. "They take advantage of whatever site they're at. Same with the Teatro. They had a truck, that's what was available."

"When people back East are writing a play they're often thinking about the building they'll put it in," says Eustis.

"In California that's much less true, simply because sometimes the buildings just don't exist."

And where the buildings do exist, their

often larger, more versatile stages provide greater production possibilities.

"The size of California's regional stages means we're less restricted to few-character, proscenium style plays," says the Old Globe Theatre's Mark Hufflund. "There's more room for things to happen, for experimentation."

While California's relative "newness" has a clear impact on the drama produced here, a very real past has also provided a source of inspiration.

In Sausalito, for instance, the four-year-old company California On Stage is strictly devoted to developing new plays exploring California's history, and has enlisted such California writers as Anna Deavere Smith, author of the performance pieces *On the Road*, and Ellen McLaugh-



Los Angeles in the 1940's was the setting for Luis Valdez's *Zoot Suit* at the Mark Taper Forum.

lin (*Infinity's House*) *Days and Nights Within* for the task.

Elsewhere, one searching for the existence of a vital, indigenous cultural heritage in California needn't look any further than one of the state's most significant dramatists, *Zoot Suit* (and the film, *La Bamba*) author Luis Valdez.

In 1986, Mame Hunt was literary manager at the Los Angeles Theatre Center when Valdez conducted a post-play discussion of his play *I Don't Need No Stinking Badges*.

"When everyone was seated after taking a break Valdez looked out from the stage at all these Anglo people and said in that voice of God he has, 'Welcome To America,' Hunt recalls.

"Your first reaction was 'what the

(expletive) are you talking about?' Then you slowly realized that he'd been studying his history and you hadn't."

"Some of California's most interesting work is about denying that the void (in history and tradition) exists," says Eustis.

*Zoot Suit* (Valdez's play set in Los Angeles in the 1940s) was a prime example of taking a piece of California history that was forgotten and making it both part of our vocabulary and a touchstone of our theatrical history.

"Sometimes the history is there but our consciousness of it isn't."

Meanwhile, observers look ahead to an increasing abundance of dramatic literature in California as the daughters and sons of its latest arrivals examine their own lives in a new land.

"So much rich writing came out of New York in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s because so many second-generation Jewish immigrants were recording their experiences," says Robert Blacker.

"This is just beginning to happen here, and I think it's going to give California play writing a vitality that the whole country hasn't seen in a long time."

California's stages are poisoning themselves to provide support for these new voices. Such venues as Los Angeles' influential East West Players and the Bilingual Foundation for the Arts, and the Bay Area's Asian-American Theatre have long provided homes for Asian and Hispanic playwrights.

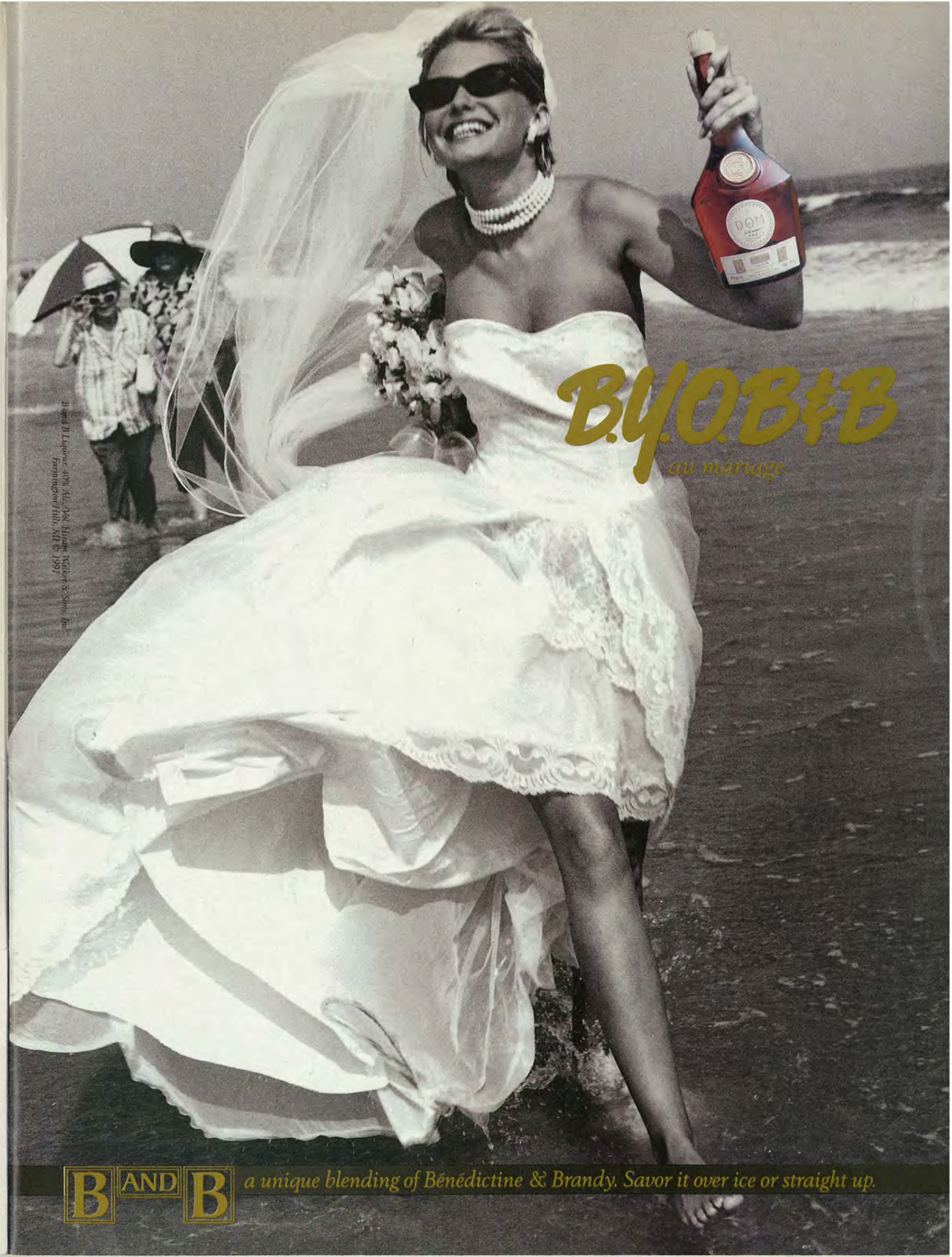
To these can be added regional theater programs, including Teatro Meta at the Old Globe Theatre, Sin Fronteras at San Diego Repertory, and the Hispanic Playwrights Project at South Coast Repertory.

Oskar Eustis of the Mark Taper Forum enthusiastically agrees with La Jolla Playhouse's Blacker that the new voices spell much excitement for California theater.

"Immigration has always been this country's biggest resource, culturally and otherwise. The same thing that happened in New York theater earlier is happening here.

"We don't admit it because, goddammit, many of these new immigrants are Latino and Asian. But they're bringing a cultural energy that's astonishingly rich. If California can tap into these resources, we can produce something unique and wonderful here." □





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## THE SILVER SEASON

### A Quarter Century of Plays and Players



A.C.T. on the 1976 U.S.A.-U.S.S.R. Cultural Exchange Program Tour of the Soviet Union (Moscow, Leningrad & Riga, Latvia). The company performed *The Matchmaker* and *Desire Under the Elms*.

**R**ick Echols, A.C.T.'s Wigmaster has been with the company for twenty-one years. He arrived in San Francisco when a friend who had applied for a scenic designer job at A.C.T. was turned down. Hearing that the company was looking for a good Wigmaster and Make-up Artist, he recommended Rick, who was hired on the spot. During his career, Rick has also created make-up and hair styles for many film and television productions, scores of commercials and the national touring companies of such hits as *42nd Street*, *La Cage Aux Folles* and

*Sweet Charity*, as well as more than 200 major A.C.T. productions.

One of the advantages of his job has been the chance to join the company on its tours within the United States and to Russia, Japan and Hawaii. "A.C.T. did annual engagements in Hawaii for ten years," he says, "playing at the University of Hawaii, Leeward College and Fort Ruger. I remember Fort Ruger particularly, because the backstage area was literally a dirt floor."

Actor Marc Singer, whose wife was from the Islands, had family there, and Echols

recalls that Marc made a big hit with her relatives by bringing them a plentiful supply of a certain brand of beer not available in Hawaii: "During that tour, Marc was playing Trofimov in *The Cherry Orchard*, and the part called for a very heavy wig and costumes. Marc was really sweating it out, and finally one of his in-laws jumped up from his seat one night during the show and shouted to Marc, 'You really look hot, brother,' and offered him one of the prized imported beers."

"During the company's 1978 tour to Japan," says Echols, "we got an incredi-



ble lesson in the total dedication of Japanese theater people to their jobs. One of them was the stage manager on a show we had brought to Tokyo, Ed Hastings' *All the Way Home*. On opening night, the intermission was ending, and the curtain was just about to go up on Act Two. In spite of the stage manager's protests, we went ahead with the second act, in true American style, not realizing that Japan's Crown Prince, who had graciously attended the premiere, was still entertaining guests in his private salon off the lobby. The poor stage manager was so upset that we had committed what, in his eyes, was an act of profound disrespect in resuming the show before the Prince was seated, that he jokingly — we hoped — threatened *hara kiri*. He almost had us convinced that this was the only honorable thing for him to do under the circumstances. Eventually, he calmed down, but we couldn't help worrying that our passports would be confiscated and we'd be forced to leave the country in disgrace."

But it was in Moscow, Echols says, that A.C.T. had its most unexpected confrontation with cultural differences: "It was in 1976, and we were the official representative of the U.S. State Department's bicentennial cultural exchange program. It was great playing the legendary Moscow Art Theater. Of course, they have an actor training program, too, and the youthful energy of the students running up and down the stairs from class to class was almost like being back home in the A.C.T. Conservatory.

"It seemed as if *everybody* in Moscow went to the theater — like there was nothing else to do. We played to packed houses every night, and our interpreters told us that all our performances had been sold out weeks in advance. One thing puzzled us: we saw these huge banners everywhere. Some of them were typical slogans like 'Art Belongs to the People,' but we kept seeing others all over the city that read '1776-1976,' and at first we couldn't figure out what the Russians were celebrating. Were they welcoming us, honoring the American bicentennial? Finally we learned the truth: the famous Bolshoi Opera was celebrating its own 200th birthday, and we couldn't overlook the irony: they were celebrating 200 years of art; we were there to celebrate 200 years of government."

The company's international tours came



LARRY MERKLE

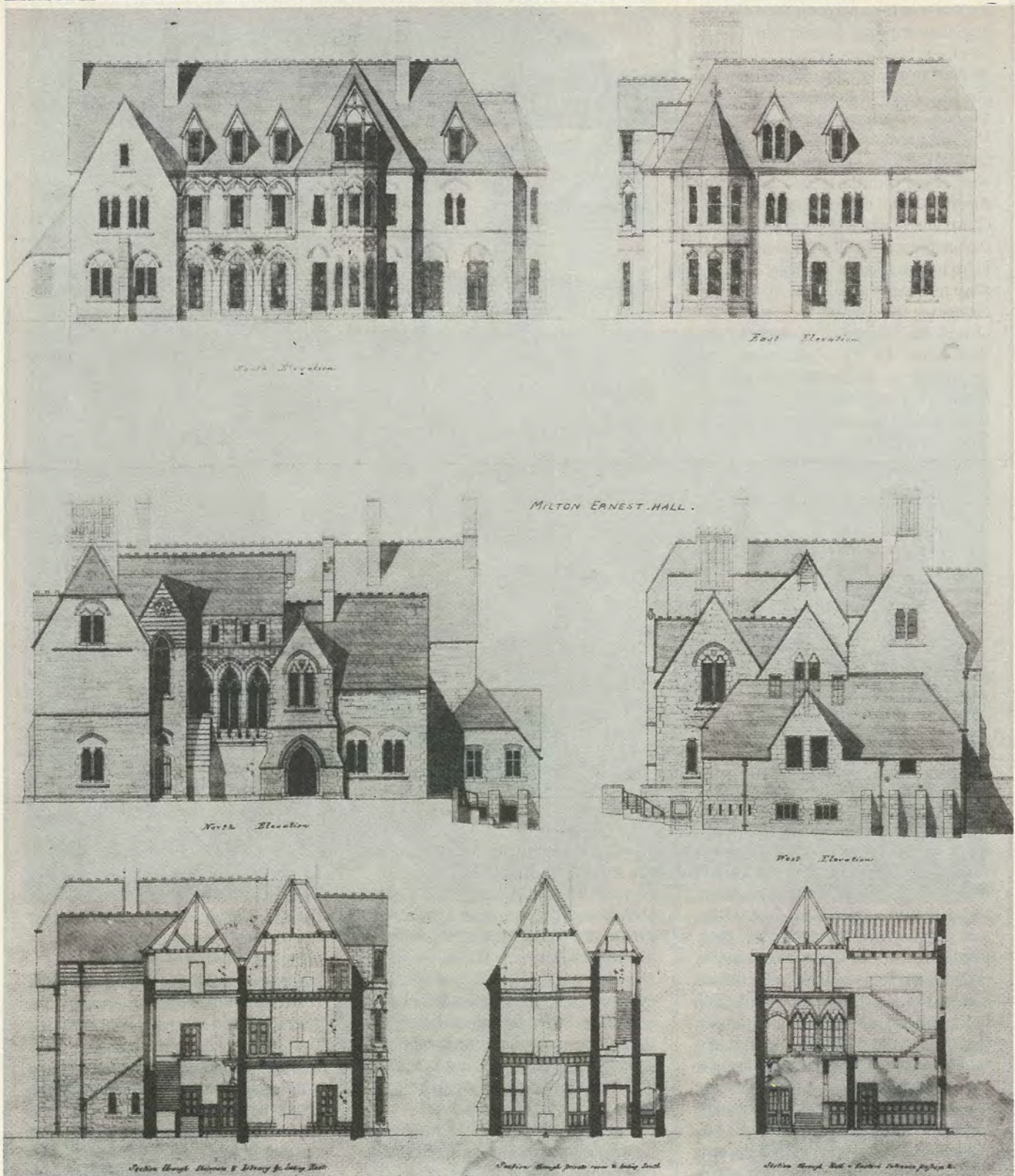
A.C.T. Wigmaster Rick Echols with Andrea Marcovicci before *Saint Joan*, 1989.

off — for the most part, anyway — without any major disasters.

On the home front, however, there have been some major fiascos, on a grand scale, like the one during the run of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1984 at the Geary. "We had to delay the start of the show by more than thirty minutes," Echols remembers. "And though most people in the audience never knew what happened, it was a real catastrophe. Just before curtain time, one of our more athletic students was doing chin-ups in the men's dressing room which was fine, except that he was using a water pipe connected to the sprinkler system. Well, it broke, and water started gushing out ten feet. One of the cast, John Hertzler, buck naked, made a game try to stop the flow with his hand, but it was out of control.

"We had to guide the actors across the fly rails way up above the stage, because the dressing rooms were completely flooded. Some had to make their entrances by precariously crossing back along the flies to the other side. And it got worse. The break activated the entire backstage sprinkler system, emptying the reservoir tank on the Geary roof, and pouring water down the backstage walls in sheets until it turned the basement into a rather uninviting swimming pool. We couldn't even open some of the doors, because water would have rushed out and the stage would have been flooded. Eventually, we had the basement drained with pumps, but believe me, the Geary backstage was damp for a *long* time. It was like trying to do theater in a very dark, dank steam room."





Design for Milton Ernest Hall, an austere three-story country house near Bedford designed by William Butterfield in 1854. Butterfield favored the Gothic style of architecture which was widely employed during the Victorian era. (From "The Victorian Country House," by Mark Girouard, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1979.)





American Conservatory Theater

*presents*

# TAKING STEPS

(1979)

by Alan Ayckbourn

*Directed by* Richard E.T. White

*Scenery by* Joel Fontaine

*Costumes by* Christine Dougherty

*Lighting by* Derek Duarte

*Sound by* Stephen LeGrand

*Dialect Coach* Lynne Soffer

*Fight Choreographer* Mark Silence

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*Associate Lighting Designer* Jane Hall

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*Mark* Charles Lanyer

*Tristram* Howard Swain

*Roland* Ray Reinhardt

*Leslie* Harold Surratt (Dec. 3-Jan. 16)

Mark Silence (Jan. 17-Jan. 25)

*Kitty* Nancy Carlin

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There will be one intermission

## Understudies

*Elizabeth* — Alicia Sedwick; *Mark* — Josiah Polhemus; *Tristram* — Adam Paul;

*Roland* — Ed Hodson; *Kitty* — Julie Oda

## Stage Management Staff

Karen Van Zandt and Donna Rose Fletcher

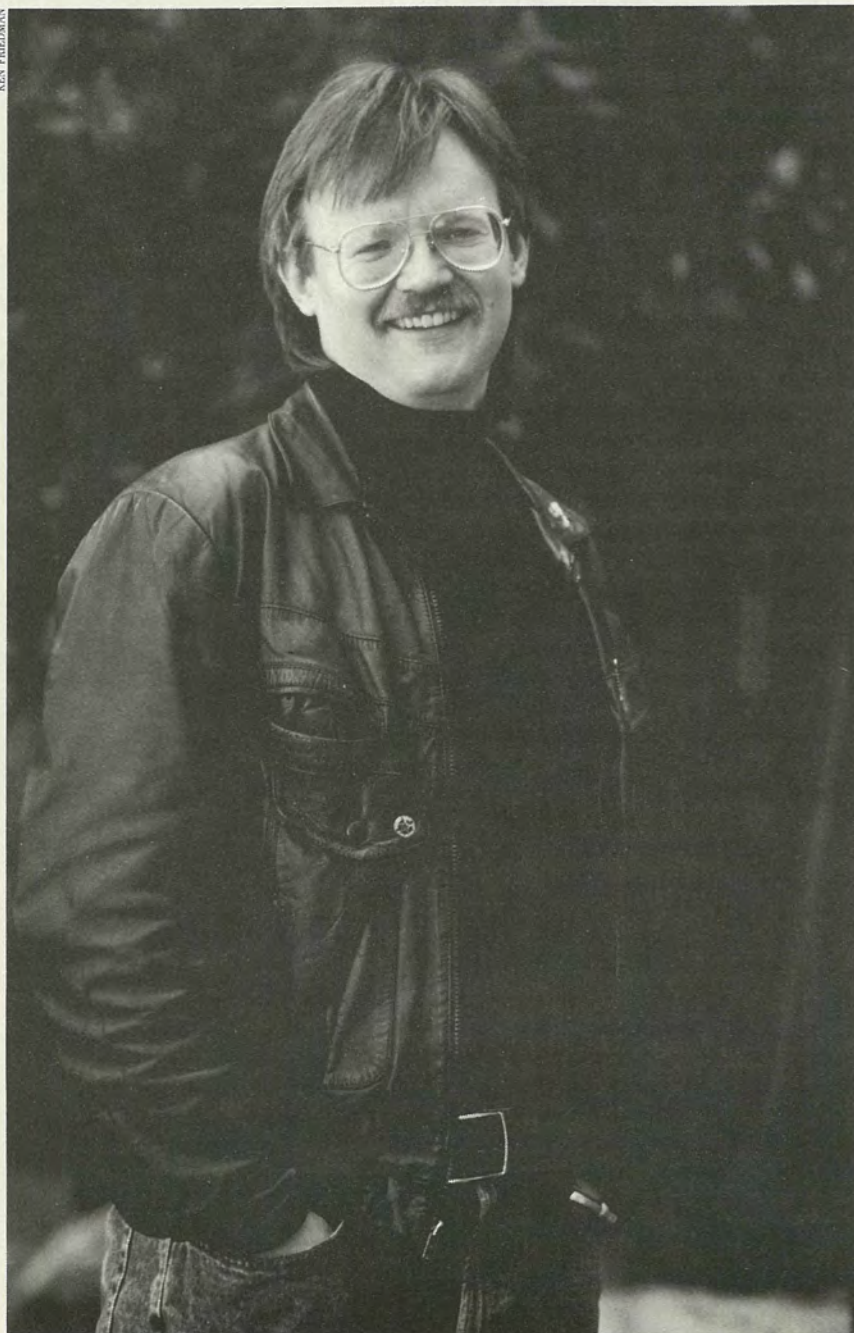
Originally produced at the Stephen Joseph Theatre-in-the-Round, Scarborough, England.



## Arts and Crafts

*Richard E.T. White on Comedy in General and  
Ayckbourn in Particular*  
with Shoshana Marchard

KEN FRIEDMAN



*Director Richard E.T. White*

Richard E.T. White is known for his stagings of epic theater on grand social themes. Alan Ayckbourn is recognized by his witty, brilliantly crafted farces. The two are an exceptional pair, and sometimes it is just such a singular partnership that inspires enlightenment in the work of both the director and the playwright. Why does a director like Richard White consider undertaking British farce?

"Ayckbourn is a precise and thoughtful observer of the illusions and fallacies of middle-aged, middle-class, married life: the three M's. And I, too, find myself middle-aged, middle-class and married," he explains. "So, no, this is not epic theater. Ayckbourn is not Shakespeare, and he's not Brecht, but that isn't what he's set out to do. There's no point in my having an avant-gardist contempt for something that's really very good. For all the laughs, his is far from a comfortable perspective. Ayckbourn's view of marriage in the pressure-cooker of bourgeois life is really very, very bleak.

"Also, Ayckbourn writes like a director — which he is — and that gives me true director's opportunities." A writer schooled very much in the British tradition, Ayckbourn's longtime working home has been the Steven Joseph Theatre in Scarborough, England. "He grew into his work," says White. "He began as an assistant stage manager in weekly repertory theater, really sort of an apprentice. He ran lights, did small walk-on roles . . . became a journeyman in all aspects of the theater." That comprehensive craftsmanship which utilizes the technical as well as visual and verbal skills is put to use in *Taking Steps*. The result is a unique stagework that relies as much on an architect's assessment of physical advantages and limitations as it does on the poet's muse.

The writing of a play for Ayckbourn is





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Tube socks with a tuxedo.



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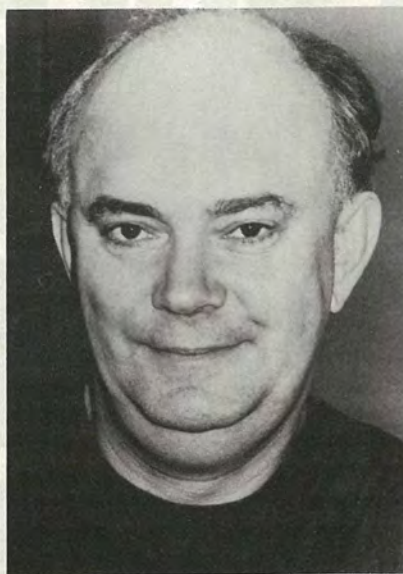
# CHANEL

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a different process than that by which most modern playwrights work. Deliberate and practical, Ayckbourn is a speedy writer who usually works on a play for no more than four weeks. He claims that the first three weeks are spent mulling the play over, figuring out in advance, in great detail, exactly who does what—and when and where. The final week is devoted to writing. Such determined planning on his part is often dictated by the settings in which the action of his plays occurs: in *Bedroom Farce*, for instance, three chambers appear onstage side by side, while the drama unfolds simultaneously among the rooms. In *Absurd Person Singular*, based on the premise that the most interesting events at parties always take place in the kitchen, the playwright set scenes in a trio of such locations, each adjoining a larger room (offstage) where



Alan Ayckbourn

a party is in progress. Guests wander in and out of the kitchens, each seen onstage, each separate and with its own physical and social rules.

In *Taking Steps* Ayckbourn wanted to write a play in which the action takes place in a three-story house, with scenes on each level of the building. Scarborough's Steven Joseph Theatre, however, where the play was developed, is an arena space. Consequently, the traditional set that suggested itself — that of a skeletal framework with three stories exposed to audience view — would work well on a proscenium stage, but not at the Steven Joseph. The audience, seated in the round about much of the stage, would simply not be able to witness the action in its entirety. The physical environment of the theater demanded some scenic monkey-business.



WILLIAM GANSEN

Susan Pellegrino and William McKeregan in A.C.T.'s 1978 production of Alan Ayckbourn's *Absurd Person Singular*, directed by Allen Fletcher, at the Geary Theater.



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Once Ayckbourn decided to set all three stories of the house on the same-level playing space, he was hooked. The challenge of attempting to achieve that physical reality took over to help shape the play. One could say *Taking Steps* grew out of the unusual circumstance where the staging idea came before the plot and characters had fully arrived. Ayckbourn, the master craftsman, gradually built the set of relationships that comprise the play, and painstakingly introduces the individual rooms one at a time—until the rooms overlap and the stories collide. The impossible space becomes an alternate and believable reality. Farce, that most complex of comedies, requires just such a believable improbability.

"There's just a hair's breadth difference between tragedy and farce," White explains. "What pushes serious events over the edge into farce is the speeding up of reality. In *Oedipus Rex*, for instance, we learn the terrible facts one by one. The story is gradually and painfully revealed through messengers, oracles, etc. We live the revelation with Oedipus, we feel each small successive shock, right up to the horrific ending. But what if you accelerated that tragedy? What if one after another, in rapid succession — even all at the same time — the various carriers of bad news ran in from the wings and started waving their arms about in front of Oedipus, each demanding that he listen to them first? There would be no stateliness, no order, merely an impossibly grotesque reality. The machine is out of control. That's farce."

Comedy arises from dissonance. Two opposites work against each other to create humor. As White describes, the dignified man in a bowler hat walking up the hill slips on a banana peel. We watch the clash of his dignity and his humiliation, and laugh. The incongruity of the moment is the genesis of the nervous impulse to laugh. We all fear the loss of control that overcomes the man in the bowler hat, and our nervous impulse overrules.

Behind that apparent loss of control there must be a perfectionist's touch. The characters in *Taking Steps* mistake each other's motives and actions again and again, so that the emotional goings-on of the play neatly mirror the near collisions



Lawrence Hecht (left) proved a seductive hallucination for bored London housewife Michael Learned (right) in the 1988 production of Ayckbourn's *Woman in Mind*, directed by Sabin Epstein.

of characters on the set. The actors dodge about the stage, and up and down the "stairs," rendering the plot more convoluted, and their actions more ridiculous, with each scene. Characters talk about each other behind one another's backs — literally, physically on stage. It is such Ayckbournian inspiration that gives the play much of its juice. "The physical reality of it all is far funnier than a mere punchline," says the director.

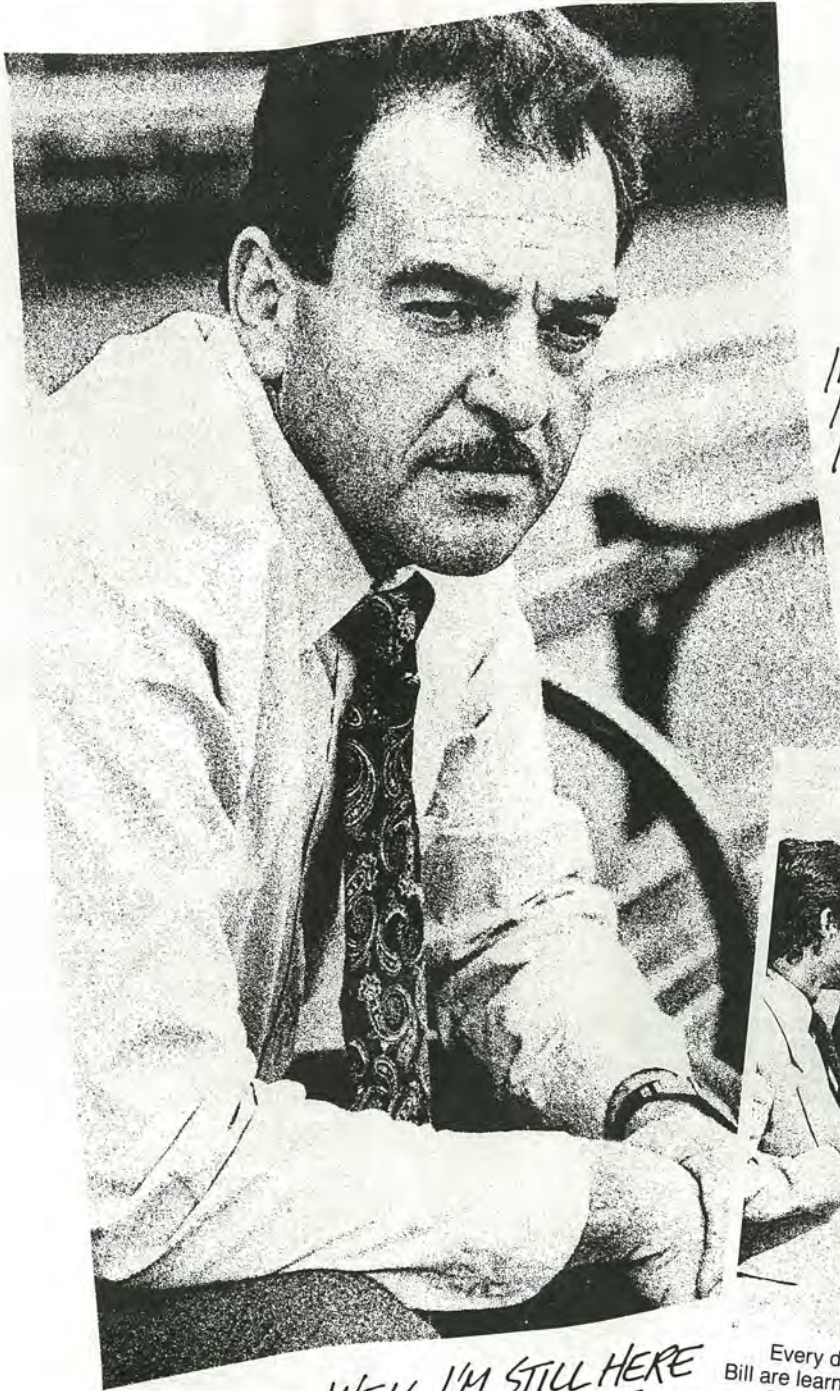
Richard White acknowledges Ayckbourn's social agenda where the playwright lampoons the way men view women in relationships. And both sexes, in this play, appear equally materialistic. "These people believe with all their hearts that they can buy happiness, that a

change in environment will mean a change in spirit," he notes. "We all fall prey to that notion. That's part of what draws me to this piece."

"It's great fun to work on a play whose serious content is conveyed in such a lighthearted, farcical manner. In that respect, *Taking Steps* fits right in with much of the work I do." This production is the fruitful pairing of meticulous craft and boisterous art. "I like a play that allows the audience to participate fully at the end," White adds. "There's a touch of ambiguity in the closing moments of *Taking Steps*. I hope that will keep people thinking, get them talking as they leave their seats. The ending raises questions. That's good theater."



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## The British and Their Spooks

In *Taking Steps*, the mansion which was once an exclusive Victorian bordello is reputedly haunted by the ghost of "Scarlet Lucy," a former resident and businesswoman. According to legend, Lucy provoked an argument with a gentleman client, who ended the discussion by running her through with his sword, causing Lucy's death, a scandal, and the closing of the brothel. A century later, as Ayckbourn's play takes place, the ghost of murdered Lucy is prowling the

premises, taking her revenge by climbing into bed with men who are then found dead in the morning. The innocent and superstitious Tristram Watson, attempting to explain her apparent presence in his bed, claims with assured conviction: "I think it's to do with the paranormal laws of the supernatural."

The supernatural, and the excavation of it, is a study for which the British have the definitive penchant. The national interest was especially keen during the

late nineteenth century when the countrymen popularized the ghost story, reflecting their fascination with otherworldly pursuits.

Spiritualism, the phenomenon of getting in touch with the dead through a medium, was highly in vogue, and seances complete with rappings, tappings and levitations were attended by such believers as Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Arthur Conan Doyle, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, and, at least on one occasion, Queen Victoria.

The spiritualist movement attracted, among others, Lewis Carroll, William Butler Yeats, and journalist W.T. Stead, editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* who also published the journal of the supernatural, *Borderland*. Appearing monthly from 1893-97, the first issue of *Borderland* succinctly stated Stead's purpose: "To democratize the study of the spook." The British citizens certainly believed every man and woman were entitled to a good scare!

So seriously did the Victorians take their phantoms that the Society for Psychical Research was founded in 1882 to conduct scientific inquiries into occult phenomena, especially the potential for life after death. Composed of both adherents and skeptics, members of this group included Cambridge philosopher Henry Sidgwick, who served as the first president, politician A.J. Balfour, and biologist and naturalist Alfred Russell Wallace (a co-ordinator with Charles Darwin on the theory of evolution). Also on the roster of members were such eminent physicists as William Crookes, Lord Rayleigh, Oliver Lodge, and J.J. Thompson, as well as psychologists William McDougall, William James and Henri Bergson. Even Sigmund Freud was a corresponding member of the Society for Psychical Research.



Woodcut by Stephen Alcorn for the First Modern Library Edition of "Frankenstein, or, the Modern Prometheus" (1818) by Mary Shelley.







*Mary Shelley, miniature by Reginald Easton.*





The abundant fascination in the supernatural on the British Isles was most apparent in the fiction produced in the second half of the nineteenth century. Novels, novellas and short stories rich in the eerie and uncanny were heir to the Gothic novels of the early 1800's — works such as the familiar *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, and Charles Maturin's now not-so-recognizable *Melmoth the Wanderer*. Many popular writers of the day experimented with tales from the crypt — Oscar Wilde (*The Picture of Dorian Gray*), Max Beerbohm (*Zulieka Dobson*), and George Eliot (*The Lifted Veil*), to name a few; and even the Bronte Sisters' *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*, as well as Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, can be placed in that class.

The most successful ghost story writers of the era, however, were those who made the genre their specialty: Sheridan LeFanu (*Green Tea*, *Uncle Silas*, *In A Glass Darkly*), Wilkie Collins (*The Woman in White*), Bram Stoker (*Dracula*), Charlotte Riddell (*The Open Door*, *Nut Bush Farm*), and Catherine Crowe, whose *The Night Side of Nature and Family Legends* was compiled of purportedly factual accounts of clairvoyance, wraiths, doppelgangers and ghosts. Vanessa D. Dickerson in her article "Supernatural Fiction" in *An Encyclopedia of Victorian Britain* credits Crowe's accounts as "some of the best in the British storehouse of ghost stories."

Like the spiritualist movement, supernatural fiction "co-existed with and countered the period's empiricism, skepticism and scientism," according to Dickerson. She concludes: "Supernaturalism served a purpose during the Victorian age. Eerie fiction not only entertained, it also reaffirmed. Tensions brought about by change could be examined or neutralized, and a sense of the being and vitality of things spiritual could be discovered at a time when materialism, scientism, and dogmatism threatened to snuff out the numinous."



Wilkie Collins. From a portrait painted in 1850 by Collins's friend J. E. Millais, who was with him when he met the original of *The Woman in White*.

The popularity of the supernatural and the spiritualist movement in late nineteenth century Britain can be largely attributed to the decline of formal faith; as the power of the church eroded with the onslaught of the Industrial Revolution, people sought to maintain some link with what became of the soul in the afterlife. Even ardent churchgoers, perhaps hedging their bets, participated in extra-curricular spiritual activities like seances.

Whatever the attraction of the supernatural to the Brits, their enthusiasm produced the famous ghost stories of the nineteenth century — the legacy of which continues to be built upon in modern literature . . . and on our stage as well.

— Laura Davis

Many thanks to Dr. Josef Altholz, *Victorian History*, University of Minnesota, for contributing.



WHO'S WHO



**NANCY CARLIN** was most recently seen in A.C.T.'s *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, alternating in the role of Maggie the Cat. Among the other roles she has played in the past six seasons at A.C.T. are Viola in *Twelfth Night*, Lucie Manette in *A Tale of Two Cities*, Beth in *A Lie of the Mind*, Iris in *Feathers*, Jennifer Dubedat in *The Doctor's Dilemma*, Masha in *The Seagull*, and Philia in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*. She has performed with many theaters on the West Coast, including Berkeley Rep, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, (in both Ashland and Portland), Berkeley Shakespeare Festival, Shakespeare Santa Cruz, Marin Shakespeare Company, Eureka Theatre, and the Pacific Conservatory of the Performing Arts. This past summer she played Helena in *All's Well That Ends Well*, Regan in *King Lear*, and Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for the first season of the California Shakespeare Festival. Ms. Carlin holds a B.A. in Comparative Literature from Brown University, and an M.F.A. from A.C.T.'s Advanced Training Program.

**ED HODSON** has appeared with A.C.T. in *Judevine*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Nothing Sacred*, *Woman in Mind*, *Golden Boy*, *A Lie of the Mind*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Hapgood*, *The Real Thing*, *Food and Shelter*, *Hamlet*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, and the Plays in Progress production of *Babylon Gardens*. Additional Bay Area acting credits include the



Encore Theatre Company's productions of *Enemies*, *The Water Engine*, *Coming Attractions*, and *Und Gretel*, and at the Eureka Theatre he has performed in *A Narrow Bed*, *Fen*, and *Landscape of the Body*. He also assayed the title role in *Amadeus* in the touring production of that show. Mr. Hodson is a member of Improv Theatre, Bay Area Theatre Sports, and studied in A.C.T.'s Advanced Training Program.



**LORRI HOLT**, who makes her A.C.T. debut in *Taking Steps*, has been seen in the Bay Area at numerous theaters. At Berkeley Repertory Theatre she was featured in *Our Country's Good*, *Reckless*, *Blue Window*, *Serious Money* and *The Both of Crime*. For ten years she was a company actress with the Eureka Theatre, where she played a wide variety of roles (of both genders) in more than twenty productions. At the Marines'

Memorial Theatre she performed in *Cloud 9*, *Top Girls* and *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All For You*, and at the Alcazar Theatre in *Welcome to Transylvania*. Her regional credits include productions at the Mark Taper Forum's Taper Too and the Actor's Theatre of Louisville. Ms. Holt has appeared on film and television in *Spirit of '76*, "Eye on the Sparrow," "Fortune Dane," and with Karl Malden in the upcoming "Back to the Streets of San Francisco," in which she portrays Anne Kelly.



**CHARLES LANYER** returns to A.C.T., where he has previously appeared as Steve Crandall in *Broadway*, Johann in *Pillars of the Community*, and Bill in *The Hot L Baltimore*. He was most recently seen at the Berkeley Repertory Theatre as Undershaft in *Major Barbara*, and in previous seasons at Berkeley Rep as George in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolf?*, the Devil/Mendoza in *Man and Superman*, and Judge Brack in *Hedda Gabler*. At the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles, he portrayed Dr. Douglas in *Miss Evers' Boys*, and Yves in Sybil Pearson's *Untitled Play*. He played Cyrano in the Garden Grove Shakespeare Festival's production of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, and during five seasons at South Coast Repertory Theatre, his roles included Dysart in *Equus*, Jack in *The Ruling Class*, Simon Hench in *Otherwise Engaged*, and Frederick the Great in *The Sorrows of Frederick*, among others. Off Broadway, he appeared with



Meryl Streep in *Alice in Concert* at the New York Shakespeare Festival. He has performed other leading roles for national companies including the San Diego Shakespeare Festival, Seattle Rep, Pacific Center for the Performing Arts Theatrefest, L.A. Theatre Center, and the Denver Center Theatre. Among his television and film credits are "The Robert Kennedy Story," "St. Elsewhere," "Hill Street Blues," "Matlock," "Moonlighting" and "The Stepfather." Mr. Lanyer is pleased to be returning to work again with old friends at A.C.T.



**JULIE ODA** joins the company this season as a Professional Theater Intern after completing studies in A.C.T.'s Advanced Training Program. On A.C.T.'s mainstage last season she was seen in *Hamlet*, and her roles in Conservatory productions include Masha in *The Seagull*, Cecily in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Christine in *Picnic*. This past summer she performed with Shakespeare Santa Cruz in *Our Town* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. She made her acting debut at the age of eight in the Los Angeles Civic Light Opera Production of *The King and I*, and her television credits include appearances on "Quincy," "Five Finger Discount," and three seasons on "Villa Alegre." Ms. Oda holds a B.A. from Mills College.

**ADAM PAUL** is a Professional Theater Intern and the recipient of the Mrs. Paul L. Wattis Fellowship. A graduate of A.C.T.'s Advanced Training Program, he appeared in John C. Fletcher's production of *Hamlet* last winter, and in studio productions



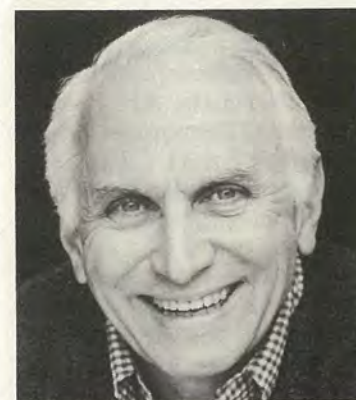
of *Awake and Sing*, *Charley's Aunt*, *Philistines*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Major Barbara*. Mr. Paul's work with Encore Theatre Company includes recent roles in *Search and Destroy* and *Road to Nirvana*.



**SUSAN PILAR** is an A.C.T. Professional Theater Intern and a recent graduate of the A.C.T. Advanced Training Program where her performances in studio productions included Hypatia Tarleton in *Misalliance*, Desdemona in *Othello* and Gwendolyn in *The Importance of Being Earnest*. At Pacific Conservatory for the Performing Arts she performed the role of Diana Morales in *A Chorus Line*, and was most recently seen at Western Stage as Adelaide in *Guys and Dolls*. After graduating from the University of Southern California with a B.A. in theatre, Ms. Pilar spent one year training and performing at The Shakespeare Theatre at the Folger in Washington, D.C. in such productions as *The Merchant of Venice* and *All's Well That Ends Well*, and toured in their Shakespeare in the Schools program as Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.



**JOSIAH POLHEMUS** joins the A.C.T. company as a member of the Professional Theater Intern Program. Currently an M.F.A. candidate in A.C.T.'s Advanced Training Program, he received his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Theater from the University of California, Santa Cruz. During four seasons with Shakespeare/Santa Cruz, his roles included Paris in *Romeo and Juliet* and Bassianus in *Titus Andronicus*, as well as performances in *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Twelfth Night*, *Richard II*, and *Once in a Lifetime*. He also appeared last winter in A.C.T.'s production of John C. Fletcher's *Hamlet*. Mr. Polhemus was most recently seen as Kim in Encore Theatre Company's production of *Search and Destroy*.



**RAY REINHARDT** returns to A.C.T. where his past performances include, among others, Efraim in *Desire Under the Elms*, Stanley in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Alfred III in *The Visit*, and the title role in the 1973 production of *Cyrano de Bergerac*. On Broadway he performed in *Tiny Alice* and *A Flea in Her Ear*, and he has played Lear in *King Lear* for the Marin Shakespeare Festival,



Mack the Knife in *Threepenny Opera* for Arena Stage, and Sir Peter Teazle in *School for Scandal* for South Coast Repertory. He has been seen in the films *The Hunt for Red October*, *Weeds* and *Absolute Strangers*, and on television in numerous shows including "Golden Girls," "Star Trek: The Next Generation" and "Hill Street Blues," as well as movies of the week "Cross of Fire," "Rich Men, Single Women," and "My Name is Bill W." Mr. Reinhardt has also performed his one-man shows *An Evening with Mark Twain* and *Shadows*.



ALICIA SEDWICK is a Professional Theater Intern and the recipient of the Mrs. Joan W. Sadler Fellowship. She is a recent graduate of A.C.T.'s Advanced Training Program where her studio roles included Hesionie Hushabye in *Heartbreak House*, Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Judith Bliss in *Hay Fever*. She was also seen on A.C.T.'s mainstage last season as a Player in *Hamlet*. This past summer at Theatre on the Square she understudied and performed both Kathy and Mo's roles in *The Kathy and Mo Show: Parallel Lives*. Ms. Sedwick has performed at the Old Globe Theatre in *Comedy of Errors*, and has, at the other end of the spectrum, worked in Hong Kong dubbing a kung fu film. Some of her favorite past performances include Lucienne in *A Flea in Her Ear*, Maire in *Translations* and Contanze in *Amadeus* at The Pacific Arts Center.

MARK SILENCE is a Professional Theater Intern and recent graduate of A.C.T.'s Advanced Training Program and earned his B.F.A. in acting at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia. While at A.C.T.



Mark performed in studio productions of *Awake and Sing*, *Major Barbara*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. He has also appeared in various regional, stock, and university productions including the original Philadelphia cast of Gary Trudeau's *Rap Master Ronnie*, the world premiere of *Rocky and Diego* at the Philadelphia Drama Guild, and in *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* for Bay Package Productions. Mr. Silence also teaches Stage Combat in the Conservatory.



HAROLD SURRATT was seen last season at A.C.T. in the title role of *The Marriage of Figaro*, and as Marcellus in *Hamlet*, Polyneices in *The Gospel at Colonus*, Bob Cratchit in *A Christmas Carol*, and in the previous season's productions of *Twelfth Night* and *Hapgood*. He first appeared with the company from 1982 to 1984, in *Loot*, *A Christmas Carol*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *The Sleeping Prince*. He has played on Broadway in *Serious Money* and off-Broadway with the New York Shakespeare Festival in *As You Like It* and *Romeo and Juliet*. His regional theater credits include South Coast Rep (*Glengarry Glen Ross*), Mark Taper

Forum's Taper Too (*The Game of Love and Chance*), Denver Center Theatre Company (*Hamlet*, *The Time of Your Life*, *Pericles*, and *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*), Old Globe Theatre (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*), Pacific Conservatory for the Performing Arts (*Death of a Salesman* and *The School for Scandal*), and the Berkeley Shakespeare Festival (*The Merchant of Venice* and the title role in *Othello*), and recent productions of *Lulu* and *Serious Money* for Berkeley Repertory Theatre. He has also appeared in the television shows "Simon and Simon," "Newhart," "The Bold and the Beautiful," and "Hunter," and in the films *The Dream Team* and *Blood In, Blood Out*. Mr. Surratt is a graduate of A.C.T.'s Advanced Training Program.



Now in his fourteenth production at A.C.T., HOWARD SWAIN has previously been seen as Treplev in *The Seagull*, Hysterium in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, Frankie in *A Lie of the Mind*, and the Dauphin in *St. Joan*. The recipient of three Bay Area Critics' Circle Awards, he has performed with Berkeley Rep, The Magic Theatre, The Berkeley Shakespeare Festival, The Eureka Theatre, San Jose Repertory, and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. This past summer at the California Shakespeare Festival's inaugural season he played Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and The Fool in *King Lear*. Mr. Swain has numerous television credits including "Hill Street Blues," "Midnight Caller," "Partners in Crime," "Kiss Shot," "Jesse Hawkes," "Mrs. Lambert Remembers Love," and he has appeared in such films as *Cherry 2000* and *Miracle Mile*.



## TAKING STEPS

### DIRECTORS, DESIGNERS, AND STAFF

**RICHARD E.T. WHITE** (Director) returns to A.C.T. where this past spring he directed Joan Holden's adaptation of Beaumarchais' *The Marriage of Figaro*. His most recent directing credit was at the Alliance Theatre in Atlanta, where his production of Larry Shue's *Wenceslas Square* opened this November. In the Chicago area, where he makes his home, he has directed at the Northlight, Court and Wisdom Bridge theatres. Other regional theatres include San Diego's Old Globe, Seattle's Empty Space, The Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, the Shakespeare Theatre at the Folger, and the Grove and Oregon Shakespeare Festivals. In the Bay Area, he has had ongoing associations with the Eureka Theatre, California Shakespeare Festival and Berkeley Rep, where he will direct *The Importance of Being Earnest* next spring. His productions, including *Twelfth Night*, *Mary Barnes*, *Macbeth*, *Reckless* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, have earned him six Dramalogue Awards and seven Bay Area Critics Circle Awards for Outstanding Direction. A member of the Paul Dresher Ensemble from 1985 to 1989, he helped create the experimental operas *Slow Fire* and *Power Failure*. Mr. White is married to director/writer Christine Sumption.

A.C.T.'s resident designer this season, **JOEL FONTAINE** (Scenery) has created scenery for the A.C.T. productions of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Dark Sun*, *When We Are Married* and *Judevine*. His regional theatre design credits include sets for *Holiday* at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Portland, *The Road to Mecca* at the Old Globe, *The Misanthrope* at the Guthrie Theatre, *The Mandrake* and *The Witch of Edmonton* at the Shakespeare Theatre at the Folger in Washington, D.C., and *A Walk in the Woods* at the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis. In the Bay Area, he has designed *Oedipus the King* and *Benefactors* for the San Jose Repertory, *The Taming of the Shrew* for the Berkeley Shakespeare Festival, and *Lloyd's Prayer* for the Eureka Theatre. A graduate of the

Yale School of Drama, Mr. Fontaine has also designed for the Yale Repertory Theatre, the Juilliard School, the Connecticut Grand Opera, the Portland Repertory Company, the California Theatre Centre, and the Pacific Northwest Ballet.

**CHRISTINE DOUGHERTY** (Costume Designer) makes her A.C.T. debut with *Taking Steps*. She has diverse design credits for theatre, opera, ballet, modern dance and fashion, and most recently her work was seen in the production of *Life During Wartime* at Berkeley Rep. Other credits include the world premiere of Eric Overmeyer's *Don Quixote de La Jolla*, directed by Stan Wojewodski Jr. for the La Jolla Playhouse, *Burn This* at San Diego Repertory Theatre, *The Last Love* at Buffalo Studio Arena, *The Eighties* at The Westwood Playhouse, *About Time* at the John Houseman Theatre with James Whitmore and Audra Lindley, and as associate designer on Des McAnuff's *Macbeth* at the La Jolla Playhouse. Her work for opera includes *Livietta e Tracolla*, *A Soldier's Tale*, *The Anatole Cycle* for Long Beach Opera, and *The Masque of Angels* in the Music Festival honoring Dominic Argento in Valparaiso, and her drama work includes design for choreographer Jose Limon, Amy Osgood and John McFall. She has also worked for the Bulgarian artist Christo Javacheff on his projects "The Umbrellas," "Le Pont Neuf Empaquete," "Surrounded Islands," "Wrapped Walkways" and "Running Fence." Currently she is designing a new line of hand-painted silks, Aluna, with Cincinnati designer Kimberly Henson. A graduate of UCSD with an M.F.A. in theatre, Ms. Dougherty is married to scenic and lighting designer Kent Dorsey.

**DEREK DUARTE** (Lighting) returns to A.C.T. for a seventh season as resident lighting designer. Most recently his work was seen in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. Last season, Mr. Duarte designed eight A.C.T. productions, including *The Gospel at Colonus*, *Dark Sun*, and *The Marriage of Figaro*. Past lighting designs for A.C.T.

include the award-winning productions of *Sunday in the Park with George*, *King Lear*, *Saint Joan*, *Nothing Sacred*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, and *Judevine*. Recent projects include *Stardust*, (sets and costumes designed by Erté) and an adaptation of Ray Bradbury's *Something Wicked This Way Comes*. His work has been represented at the American Festival Theatre in Stratford, Connecticut, the Marines Memorial Theater, Berkeley Rep, Los Angeles Theater Center, Milwaukee Rep, San Jose Rep, Berkeley Shakespeare Festival, the Fringe Festival in Edinburgh, Scotland, and the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. In 1986 he was awarded a Theatre Communications Group grant to study lighting design in New York City. Mr. Duarte holds an M.F.A. in theatre technology from UCLA and teaches at Chabot College.

**STEPHEN LeGRAND** (Music and Sound) is now in his sixth season as sound designer and composer for A.C.T. His work with the company has included musical compositions for *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *The Seagull* and *Faustus in Hell*. He wrote the music for *A Lie of the Mind*, *Saint Joan*, and *Happgood* with his collaborator Eric Drew Feldman with whom he has received awards for their scores for *The Lady's Not for Burning* at A.C.T., *The Tooth of Crime* and *The Rivals* at Berkeley Rep, and *Fen* at the Eureka Theatre. Mr. LeGrand's recent work has included scores for *Yankee Dawg You Die* at Berkeley Rep and the Los Angeles Theatre Center, *Lulu*, and *Fuente Ovejuna* for Berkeley Rep. Last season he composed music for *The Wash* at the Mark Taper Forum.

**KAREN VAN ZANDT** (Production Stage Manager) is now in her 13th season with A.C.T., where she has stage-managed productions of *Saint Joan*, *Sunday in the Park with George*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Mourning Becomes Electra*, *Another Part of the Forest*, *Twelfth Night*, *Burn This*, *The Gospel at Colonus*, *Hamlet*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, and *Cat on a Hot Tin*



*Roof*. She has also worked at the Marines Memorial Theatre as production stage manager for *The Boys in Autumn* (with Kirk Douglas and Burt Lancaster) and *Top Girls* by Caryl Churchill.

**BRUCE ELSPERGER** (Stage Manager), who is now in his fifth season with A.C.T., was in Seattle for the previous three years as Production Stage Manager at the Intiman Theatre and Production Manager with the Bathhouse Theatre. He directed the Intiman's acting intern production of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and produced and directed various shows independently, including *A Breeze from the Gulf*, *Bag Lady*, and a touring production of his musical revue, *A Tribute to American Musical Theater*. Before moving to Seattle he had served as Production Stage Manager with P.C.P.A. Theaterfest in Solvang

and Santa Maria. Mr. Elspenger, who studied in London and graduated from Drake University, was also an art therapist in the school systems in Iowa and Montana.

**ALICE ELLIOTT SMITH** (Stage Manager) is in her thirteenth season at A.C.T., where she has been the company's master scheduler, production coordinator of Plays in Progress, director of staged readings, associate director of the Troubadour program, director of the studio production *Ah, Wilderness!*, and co-director of *Morning's at Seven*, *Picnic*, and the Plays in Progress production *Rio Seco*. In recent seasons she stage-managed *Private Lives*, *The Lady's Not for Burning*, *The Floating Light Bulb*, *Faustus in Hell*, *A Lie of the Mind*, *Diamond Lil*, *Golden Boy*, *Feathers*, *Woman in Mind*, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Judevine*, *Hapgood*,

*Burn This*, *Food and Shelter*, *Dark Sun*, and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*.

**DONNA ROSE FLETCHER** (Assistant Stage Manager) comes to her first A.C.T. project having just completed the California Shakespeare Festival's inaugural season. Previous work for the Festival includes *Julius Caesar* in 1988 and *Twelfth Night* in 1990. For the Berkeley Repertory she has stage managed several plays, including *Lulu* and *The Winter's Tale*. She has an ongoing association with the hit musical *Little Shop of Horrors*, having stage managed most of the 5 year off-Broadway run, co-directed the Paris company *La Petite Boutique des Horreurs*, and toured Broadway and Switzerland with *Der Kleine Horror-Laden*. Ms. Fletcher will open a new company of that show this February in Stockholm.

## AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATRE DIRECTORS, DESIGNERS, AND STAFF

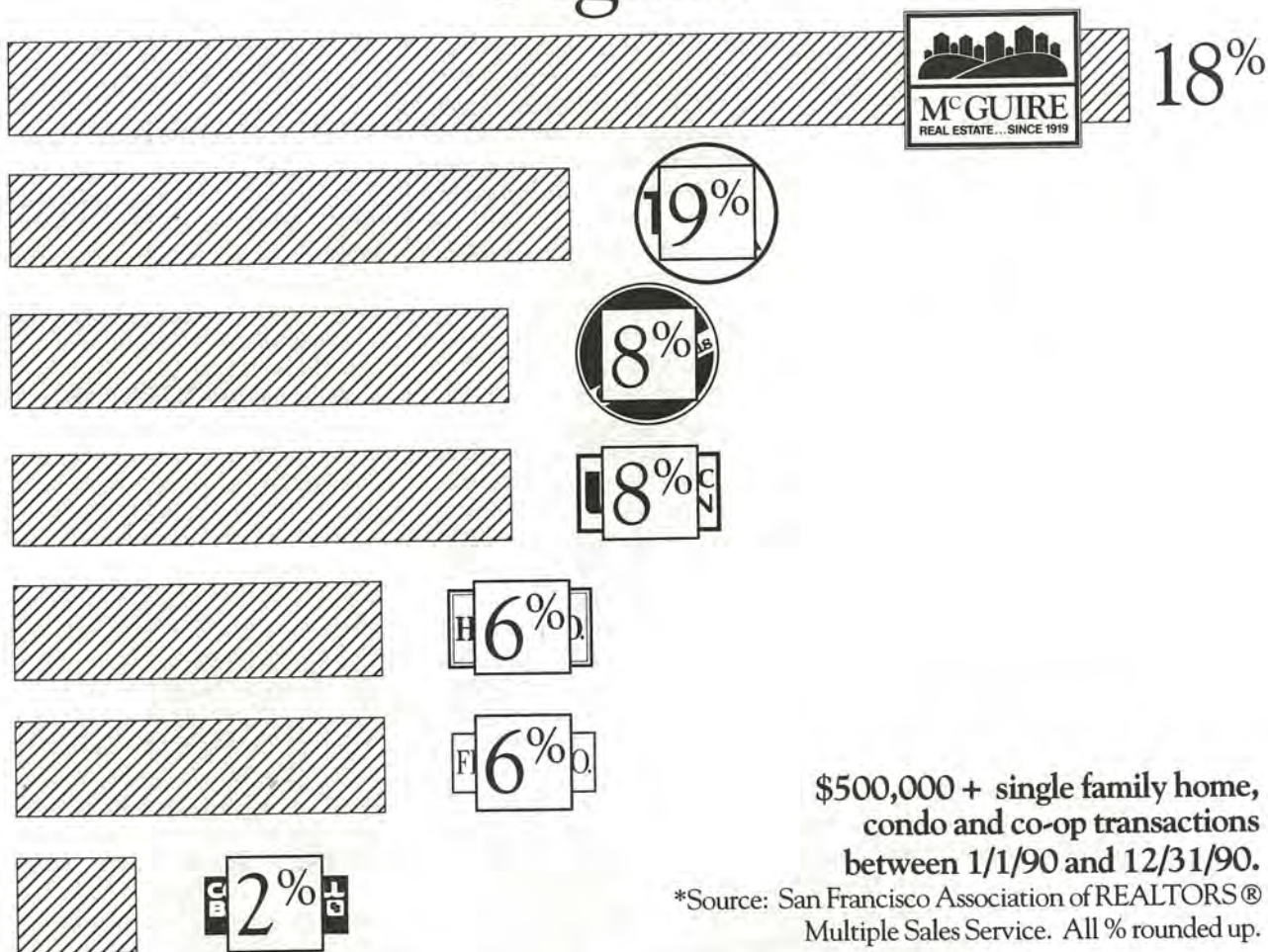
**EDWARD HASTINGS** (Artistic Director), is a founding member of A.C.T. having joined the company during its formation in Pittsburgh in 1965 and served as Executive Director under General Director William Ball. He was appointed Artistic Director by the Board of Trustees when Mr. Ball resigned his position in February, 1986. During A.C.T.'s twenty-five years in San Francisco, Mr. Hastings has directed thirty repertory productions, including *Our Town*, *A Delicate Balance*, *The Time of Your Life*, *The House of Blue Leaves*, *Broadway*, *Street Scene*, *All the Way Home*, *Fifth of July*, *The Girl of the Golden West*, *The Real Thing*, and *King Lear*. This year, he directs a Silver Anniversary Season revival of his first San Francisco A.C.T. production, *Charley's Aunt*. Mr. Hastings' commitment to new writing and playwrights is evident in the many world premieres he has directed at A.C.T., including Lisette Lecat Ross' *Dark Sun*, David Budbill's *Judevine*, Michael McClure's *General Gorgeous*, William Hamilton's *Happy Landings* and Marsha Norman's *The Holdup*. He served as resident director at the Eugene O'Neill

Playwrights' Conference for three summers and taught acting in 1984 at the Shanghai Drama Institute as part of the Theater Bridge Program between A.C.T. and the Shanghai theater. He has been involved in the development of cultural exchange and is a member of the Arts International Committee of the Institute of International Education. In 1978, his production of *All the Way Home* was presented in Tokyo. He directed a national company of the London and Broadway musical hit *Oliver!*, staged the American production of *Shakespeare's People* starring Michael Redgrave, directed the Australian premiere of the *Hot I Baltimore*, and restaged his A.C.T. production of Sam Shephard's *Buried Child* in Serbo-Croatian at the Yugoslav Dramatic Theatre in Belgrade. Other productions have been presented on A.C.T. tours in the United States, including Hawaii, and he has been a guest director at major resident theaters throughout the country. A graduate of Yale College and the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, Mr. Hastings is also a teacher in the A.C.T. Conservatory.

**JOHN SULLIVAN** (Managing Director) joined A.C.T. as its chief administrative officer in 1986. A native San Franciscan, Mr. Sullivan has been active in the theater since the mid-1970s, when he directed Harvey Perr's *Afternoon Tea* for the Circle Repertory Company in New York. In 1977 he joined the staff of the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles as a resident director and producer. As head of the Taper's Forum Laboratory he produced numerous new plays by such writers as David Mamet, Susan Yankowitz, and A.R. Gurney. More recently he produced *The Detective*, a collaboration between Joseph Chaikin and Vaudeville Nouveau at San Francisco's Magic Theatre. A former deputy director of the California Arts Council, Mr. Sullivan has served on the boards of Theatre Bay Area and the San Francisco New Vaudeville Festival. After completing his graduate work at the University of Southern California's School of Cinema, Mr. Sullivan wrote and directed numerous short films for the educational and entertainment markets, including three which were featured on national



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Emmy Award broadcasts. For five years he was a consultant to the Rand Corporation, focusing his work on the process and societal impact of popular culture. As a communications consultant Mr. Sullivan has advised such diverse clients as the California Roundtable, Kansas City Power and Light, and Major League Rodeo. Among his writings is *The National Outdoor Leadership School's Wilderness Guide*, a manual for camping and mountaineering published by Simon and Schuster, and numerous articles for magazines and newspapers.

**BENNY SATO AMBUSH** (Associate Artistic Director) is a veteran theater professional with national and international experience as a director, educator, producer, and arts administrator. Before joining A.C.T. last season, he was the Artistic/Producing Director of the Oakland Ensemble Theatre (OET) for eight years, where his directing credits included *Division Street*, *A Night at the Apollo*, *O. Henry's Christmas*, *Turner of Horses*, and *Alterations*. Last season he directed *Pigeon Egghead* in A.C.T.'s Plays in Progress series, which has helped inspire the creation of a Bay Area Native American Theater Company — Turtle Island Ensemble. He also directed *Letters From a New England Negro* for the 1991 National Black Theater Festival in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. During the 1991/92 season, he will direct *Fences* for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Portland, and *Miss Evers' Boys* for the Alabama Shakespeare Festival. In addition, he has served as a National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Arts Management Fellow in its Special Projects Program; as an Assistant Director-in-Residence at Washington, D.C.'s Arena Stage, as an NEA Directing Fellow at the Pittsburgh Public Theatre; and as a United States Information Agency sponsored lecturer to Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya. He has served on the Board of Theatre Bay Area and chaired its Theater Services Committee, is a member of the Multi-Cultural Advisory Council for the California Arts Council, and has been active locally, regionally, and nationally in advocacy for cultural equity, non-traditional casting, and pluralism in American art. Mr. Ambush received his B.A. in theater arts and dramatic litera-

ture from Brown University, and his M.F.A. in stage directing from the University of California, San Diego.

**JOY CARLIN** is an Associate Artistic Director at A.C.T., and has been a member of the acting company for many years. Among the roles she has played are Big Mama in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, Miss Pross in *A Tale of Two Cities*, Annie Parker in *When We Are Married*, Meg in *A Lie of the Mind*, Enid in *The Floating Light Bulb*, Miss Prism in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Kitty Duval in *The Time of Your Life*, Bananas in *The House of Blue Leaves*, Asa in *Peer Gynt*, Aunt Sally in *All the Way Home*, Birdie in *The Little Foxes*, and Odile in *Opéra Comique*. She has been Resident Director of the Berkeley Repertory Theatre, and served as its Acting Artistic Director. Among her directing credits are *The House of Bernarda Alba*, *The Lady's Not for Burning*, *The Doctor's Dilemma*, *Marco Millions*, *Golden Boy*, *Hapgood*, and last season's world premiere production of *Food and Shelter* at A.C.T., as well as productions at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the San Jose Repertory Company, A Contemporary Theatre of Seattle, and the Shanghai Youth Drama Troupe of China, where she directed *You Can't Take It With You*.

**DENNIS POWERS** (Associate Artistic Director) joined A.C.T. in 1967, during the company's first San Francisco season, after six years as an arts writer at the Oakland Tribune. Before being named to his present position in 1986 by Edward Hastings, he worked with William Ball as, successively, Press Representative, Staff Writer, Dramaturge, and Artists and Repertory Director. The A.C.T. productions on which he has collaborated as dramaturge or adaptor include *Oedipus Rex*, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *The Bourgeois Gentleman*, *King Richard III*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Saint Joan* and *Diamond Lil*. The most popular of his adaptations, the sixteen-year-old *A Christmas Carol*, was written with Laird Williamson (who was also his collaborator on *Christmas Miracles*), which premiered at Denver Center Theater Company in 1985 and was later published. Among the other theaters with which he has been associated are Long Wharf The-

ater in New Haven, Stanford Repertory Theater, Pacific Conservatory for the Performing Arts and San Francisco's Valencia Rose Cabaret Theater. Mr. Powers' reviews and articles have appeared in the *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Saturday Review*, *Los Angeles Times*, *American Arts*, *Arts Review*, *Performing Arts* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

**SUSAN STAUTER** (Conservatory Director) came to A.C.T. four years ago as Director of the Young Conservatory. She is a playwright (her *Miss Fairchild Sings* was produced at Little Victory Theatre in Los Angeles), director (more than 40 productions), actress (Cabaret Repertory Theatre), and educator. She earned her M.A. from California State University Fullerton, taught in southern California for 14 years (earning a citation for outstanding teaching in 1986/87), and served as founding Chairman of the Theatre Department of the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts. At the Conservatory she has created and directed *Find Me a Hero*, *The Wildest Storm of All (Teenage Voices Confront AIDS)*, and *To Whom It May Concern*, directed *The Diary of Anne Frank*, and *Angels Fall* and co-directed *Who Are These People?*. She serves on the Superintendent's Task Force for the San Francisco School of The Arts, on the Board of Directors of Bay Area Theatre Sports, and is a member of the Advisory Board for Teens Kick-Off. Ms. Stauter has been a creative consultant at Disneyland, and toured to Alaska as Playwright-in-residence with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival's Educational Outreach Program.

**RICK ECHOLS** (Wigmaster) has designed hair and makeup for over 200 productions at A.C.T. since 1971, including *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Dark Sun*, *Hamlet*, *A Tale of Two Cities* and the company's touring productions to Connecticut, Hawaii, Russia, and Japan. He also created wigs and makeup for A.C.T.'s television productions of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *A Christmas Carol*. Among his other television and film credits are *A View to a Kill*, *Birdy*, "Over Easy" with Hugh Downs, *A Life in the Theatre* with Peter Evans and Ellis Rabb, "The Kathryn Crosby Show," and over 100 commercials.

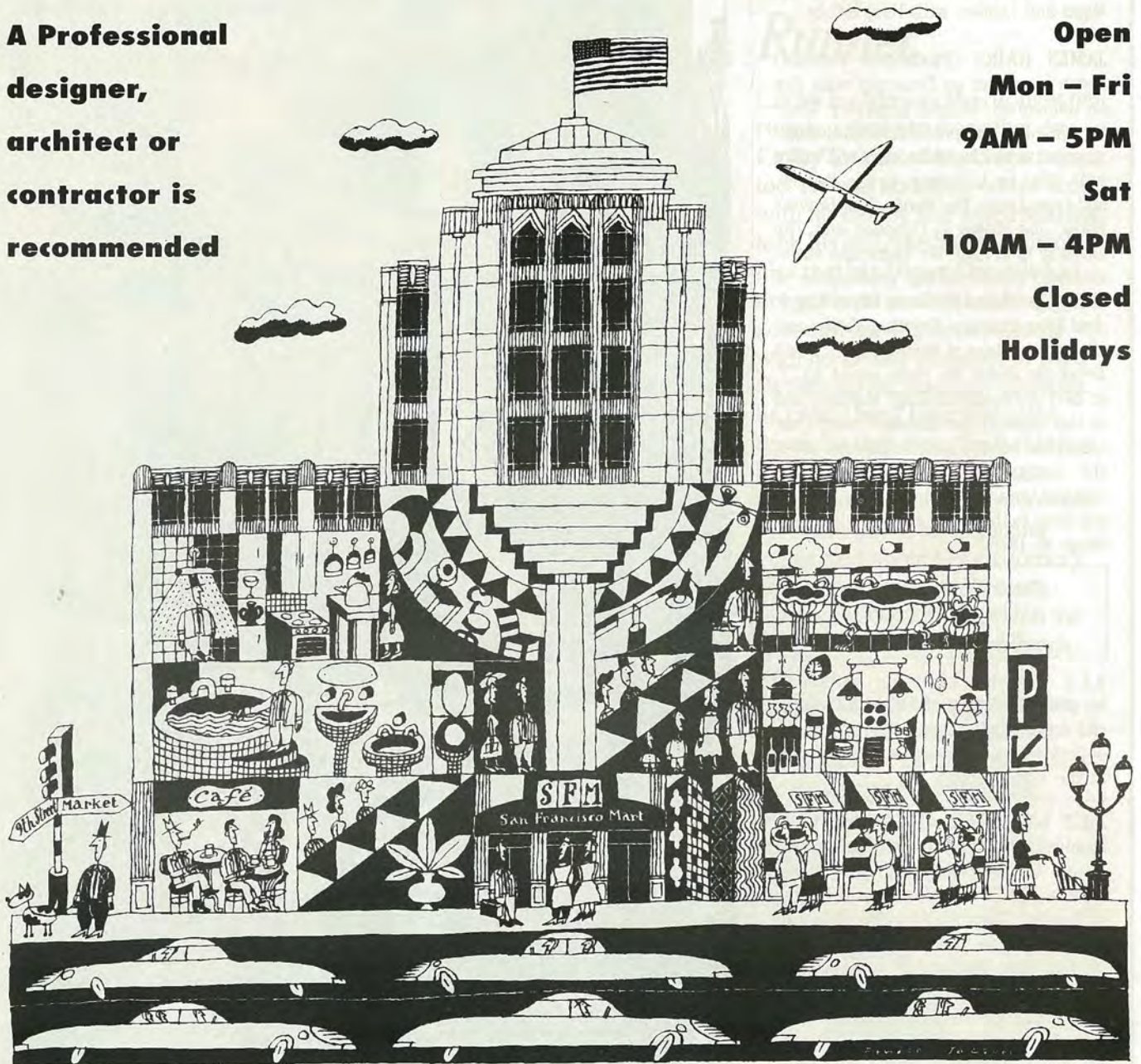


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Mr. Echols designed hair and makeup for the original production of *Cinderella* for the San Francisco Ballet and *Hamlet* with Anne Baxter and Christopher Walken for the American Shakespeare Festival, and *A Life* with Roy Dotrice for the Citadel Theatre in Edmonton, Canada. He worked on the national tours of *42nd Street Charity* with Debbie Allen, and toured to Las Vegas and London with Bing Crosby.

**JAMES HAIRE** (Production Director) began his career on Broadway with Eva Le Gallienne's National Repertory Theater. Among the productions he stage-managed were *The Madwoman of Chaillot* with Miss Le Gallienne, Sylvia Sydney, and Leora Dana, *The Rivals*, *John Brown's Body*, *She Stoops to Conquer*, and *The Comedy of Errors*. Mr. Haire also stage-managed the Broadway productions of *Georgy* (a musical by Carole Bayer Sager), *And Miss Reardon Drinks a Little*, and the national tour of Woody Allen's *Don't Drink the Water*. Mr. Haire joined A.C.T. in 1971 as Production Stage Manager, and in this capacity has managed more than a hundred productions; he has also taken the company on numerous regional, national, and international tours, including those to the Soviet Union in 1976 and Japan in 1978.

Thanks to Barbie Wilde,  
Chris & Viv Parry,  
and Chris Sumption

A.C.T. operates under an agreement between the League of Resident Theatres and Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States.

A.C.T. is a constituent of Theatre Communications Group, the national organization for the nonprofit professional theatre. A.C.T. is a member of the League of Resident Theatres, American Arts Alliance, California Theatre Council, Theatre Bay Area, Performing Arts Services, San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, and San Francisco Convention & Visitors Bureau.

A.C.T. logo designed by Landor Associates.

**ssdc** The Director is a member of the Society of  
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Frontispiece from J. Sheridan Le Fanu's "In a Glass Darkly." Illustration by Edward Ardizzone.





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WINE LOTS TO FORM A  
PERFECTLY BALANCED  
CUVÉE. HOWEVER,  
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OF OUR RESERVE  
WINES, AGED IN OUR CELLAR IN  
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MATELY PROVIDES THE FINESSE AND  
ELEGANT CHARACTER THAT HAVE  
BEEN THE HALL-  
MARKS OF OUR  
HOUSE FOR CENTURIES. EXCESSIVE?  
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WORTH EVERY  
INCH TRAVELED. ESPECIALLY THE  
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## A.C.T. Prologues

A.C.T. and the Junior League of San Francisco invite you to join us for informative discussions, free of charge, before the Tuesday Preview series performance. The Prologues are held from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Doors open at 5:00 p.m. Upcoming discussions include:

December 3, 1991

*Taking Steps* by Alan Ayckbourn  
at the Stage Door Theater

January 21, 1992

*Cyrano de Bergerac* by Edmond Rostand  
at Theatre on the Square

February 4, 1992

*Charley's Aunt* by Brandon Thomas  
at the Stage Door Theater

March 24, 1992

*The Cocktail Hour* by A.R. Gurney  
at Theatre on the Square

April 7, 1992

*Good* by C.P. Taylor  
at the Stage Door Theater

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## NEWS FROM THE AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER

SCOTTY MORRIS



Left to right: A.C.T. Artistic Director Edward Hastings, Harvest Ball co-chairs Demi Bowles and Diana Dalton, (second and fourth from left) and Roger Jobson were greeted by a handsome cavalier-ATP actor Michael Stevenson.

### Macy's Harvest Masquerade Ball A Smashing Success

**K**nights on white horses, fairy princesses in gossamer, and no one turned into a pumpkin! On Saturday, October 19 Macy's on Union Square was magically transformed into an 18th century evening of fantasy and intrigue celebrating the opening of San Francisco's

theater season and A.C.T.'s 25th Anniversary. A fundraiser benefitting A.C.T.'s Conservatory Scholarship Fund, the Harvest Masquerade Ball inaugurated a spectacular new seasonal event at Macy's — the two-week Harvest Celebration, designed to bring the rich bounty of the Golden

SCOTTY MORRIS



Mary Green Swig met renowned chef Wolfgang Puck, the creative restaurateur who masterminded the Harvest Masquerade Ball banquet.

State from the field to the table in colorful displays of fall gardens, a gourmet farmer's market, an array of cooking classes by top California chefs, and exquisite harvest table settings. Highlighted by an ambrosial repast created by celebrated restaurateur Wolfgang Puck, the Harvest Masquerade Ball was hosted by Mr. Daniel Finkelstein, Chairman of Macy's California, and Harvest Masquerade Ball Co-chairs Diana Dalton and Mrs. Henry Bowles.

String ensembles entertained with dulcet melodies while patrons dined by candlelight in an autumnal setting at a one-of-a-kind culinary extravaganza. Wolfgang Puck and distinguished chefs Anne and David Gingrass of Postrio, Kazuto Matsusaka of Chinois on Main, Makoto Tanaka of Spago, and Postrio Pastry Chef Patrick Levesque designed and executed a memorable menu that included a range of appetizers with smoked salmon and sturgeon, fresh and smoked sausages, Oscetra caviar, and Postrio pizzas; Chinois lobster risotto and Spago roasted rack of veal; and miniature desserts featuring the nuts and berries of autumn, all accompanied by sweet nectars of the vine from Chappellet Vineyards, J. Jordan Champagne, and Bonny Doon Vineyard.

The Macy's West Building on Union Square became a wooded wonderland through the deft touch of Academy Award-winning designer Peter Young, set decorator for the BATMAN and ROBIN HOOD films, and partygoers embarked on a remarkable journey beneath a 30-foot domed cathedral of oak boughs vaulting the main aisle. Throughout the fantasy-filled evening A.C.T. Conservatory students performed theatrical vignettes, from dangerous duels to comic capers, directed by A.C.T. Resident Director Sabin Epstein, while Dance Through Time entertained with historical promenades in period costume. And before the adventure was through, merry revelers donned mystical masks and danced the night away to the spirited melodies of the Solid Senders.

Thanks to Macy's, the Harvest Masquerade Ball helped raise over 20% of the \$175,000 in scholarship funds A.C.T. awards annually. Four professional train-





SCOTT MORRIS

A.C.T. Managing Director John Sullivan (right) with Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Finkelstein.

ing programs serve over 1,200 students each year: the Advanced Training Program, leading to the Master of Fine Arts degree; the Academy, providing ongoing performance training; the Young Conservatory, serving students 8 to 18; and the Summer Training Congress. Through the A.C.T. Conservatory Scholarship Fund many deserving students realize their educational goals.

## Craig Slight Appointed To ARTS Panel

A.C.T. Young Conservatory Director **Craig Slight** has been selected by the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts (NFAA) for a four-year appointment to the Arts Recognition and Talent Search (ARTS) panel. Mr. Slight joins a board of four theater professionals and educators which nominates young artists for selection as Presidential Scholars in the Arts, and awards scholarship monies to ARTS applicants whose work has been judged outstanding. Since its founding in 1981, more than 54,000 high school seniors from every state in the nation have participated in the ARTS program. A.C.T. Artistic Director Edward Hastings served on the ARTS program theater panel from 1983-1985.

Craig Slight joined A.C.T. in 1988 as

Director of the A.C.T. Young Conservatory, and currently also serves on the Executive Board of Theatre Bay Area. During his tenure with A.C.T., he founded and directs the New Plays Program — a workshop designed to enable young people to experience the stage in works relevant to their age and circumstances, commissioned from eminent playwrights and created specifically for the group. The first

work developed in this program, Timothy Mason's *Ascension Day*, was recently published by Dramatists Play Service. He is co-editor, with Jack Sharrar, of *Great Scenes from the Stage for Young Actors*, published by Smith and Kraus in March 1991; and *Great Monologues for Young Actors*, to be released in January 1992. Prior to his arrival at A.C.T., Mr. Slight was Head of the Acting and Directing Program at the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts, and served as Staff Director of Acting Technique and Shakespeare at the Interlochen Center for the Arts.

The NFAA was created in 1981 to encourage young artists in the fields of dance, music, jazz, theater, visual arts and writing by assisting them financially and by creating opportunities for them to advance in their educational and professional careers. Approximately \$14.5 million in ARTS program services and unrestricted cash awards have been allocated by The NFAA to aspiring young artists. The NFAA is a publicly supported, non-profit, non-governmental organization headquartered in Miami.

ARTS applicants are solicited from every public and private high school, arts and education association. Following preliminary screening by the panels of experts,



A.C.T. Young Conservatory Director Craig Slight (center) with students Nicholas Shenkin (left) and Rachel Botchan.



the final adjudication phase is held in Miami where applicants in each discipline present prepared auditions and participate in observed master classes and exercises. ARTS is a unique program in that applicants are judged against a standard of excellence within each art discipline, not against each other. Categories of achievement award prizes from \$100 to \$3,000, and the NFAA nominates the top 50 ARTS awardees to the White House Commission on Presidential Scholars which selects the 20 Presidential Scholars in the Arts. Following a public performance at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and exhibits and readings at the Smithsonian, selected ARTS awardees are presented in showcase performances in major centers throughout the nation.

Interested parties can contact the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts, Arts Recognition and Talent Search program at ARTS Office, 300 N.E. 2nd Avenue, Miami, Florida 33132, (305) 347-3416.

## Start The New Year With America's Theatre Calendar

Theater lovers will want to count the days in 1992 with *America's Theatre Desk Calendar*, a beautiful new daily appointment book filled with 112 pages of extraordinary visuals and interesting historical dates and facts. Two images from A.C.T. have been chosen to be among the 53 color and black & white designs that play opposite the weekly calendar: from John C. Fletcher's 1991 production of *Hamlet*, a stunning Ken Friedman photograph of Byron Jennings as the Danish Prince and David Maier as the Ghost of King Hamlet, accompanied by commentary from actor Adam Paul; and the definitive image of the Geary Theater by photographer Larry Merkle, in both color and black & white, graces the cover and interior as well.

America's Theatre Desk Calendar celebrates the depth and diversity of the American stage and showcases work from every part of the country. Broadway production photographs by Martha Swope and design renderings by Tony Walton,



William Ivey Long and Santo Loquasto of contemporary shows such as *Grand Hotel*, *City of Angels*, and *The Will Rogers Follies*, join images of memorable performances by Julie Harris in *A Member of the Wedding*, and Hume Cronyn and Jessica Tandy in *A Delicate Balance*. The range of work represented encompasses American stage productions from Broadway, Off Broadway, regional, university, community, secondary school and children's theater, and includes historical production posters and the cartoons of Al Hirschfeld, Lynda Barry and Jules Feiffer. In addition, each image is accompanied by a brief commentary of artistic, historic or emotional relevance to the subject depicted.

A limited supply of this edition of *America's Theatre Desk Calendar* is available at the concessions stand in the lobby of the Stage Door Theater for \$12.95 (elsewhere sold for \$16.95). When you record a dentist appointment, look ahead to Mother's Day, or chart your own personal production schedule, you can enjoy the magic of theater every day of the year.

## A.C.T. Costume Rental

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to walk around in Peter Donat's boots as Cyrano? Or try on Joy Carlin's mouse ears and tail from *General Gorgeous*? Maybe you want to celebrate

a bridal shower with a group of friends in the fashion of Roaring 20's flappers, or your boss's bon voyage party like Chicago gangsters. Now, your active imagination can find great results at A.C.T. Costume Rental. And that's just the beginning!

With 25 years and over 200 theatrical productions in San Francisco, A.C.T. has one of the best costume stocks around. From modern sportswear to handmade period garments to one-of-a-kind original designs, all of our costumes are created especially for A.C.T. by top theater and film designers. Whether you need to outfit an entire production or crave a single costume for a private function, A.C.T.'s rental staff will help you meet your costuming needs from hundreds of beautifully maintained craftspieces.

In addition to a wide variety of garments spanning the centuries and globe, costumes for many complete productions are available for rental. *Oklahoma!*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Sunday in the Park with George*, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, and many Chekhov plays are just a few of the shows available in their entirety.

A.C.T.'s large stock of theatrical costumes is available for rental by schools, theaters, production companies and individuals. You can coordinate your own

*Continued on page P-31*



Peter Donat in the 1972 production of *Cyrano de Bergerac*.



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#### A.C.T. NEWS

*continued from page P-28*

ensemble, or rely on A.C.T.'s staff of professional costumers to design one for you.

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*Joy Carlin in General Gorgeous*

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**Location:** The lobby of the Geary Theater, located on Geary at Mason Street one block west of Union Square.

**Box Office Hours:** 10am-9pm Tuesday through Saturday; 10am-6pm Sunday and Monday.

**Ticket Information/Charge by phone:** (415) 749-2ACT. Use your Visa, MasterCard, or American Express card.

**Box Offices at the Stage Door Theater, Theatre on the Square and the Orpheum Theatre:** Full-service box offices will be open 90 minutes before each performance in these venues.

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**Group Discounts:** For groups of 15 or more, call Linda Graham at (415) 346-7805 for special prices.

**Latecomers:** Latecomers will be seated at an appropriate interval.

**Mailing List:** Call 749-2228 to request advance notice of shows, events, and subscription information.

**Gift Certificates:** Give A.C.T. to a friend, relative, co-worker, or client. Gift Certificates are perfect for every celebration.

**Discounts:** Half-price tickets are frequently available on the day of performance at STBS on Union Square in San Francisco. Half-price Student and Senior Rush tickets are availa-

ble at the theatre box office 90 minutes prior to curtain. (Please note: Rush tickets are available for *The Piano Lesson* 60 minutes prior.) Matinee Senior Rush price is \$5.00. All half-price tickets are subject to availability, one ticket per valid I.D.

**Ticket Policy:** All sales are final, and there are no refunds. Only current subscribers enjoy ticket exchange privileges or lost ticket insurance. If at the last minute you are unable to attend, you may make a contribution by donating your tickets to A.C.T. The value of donated tickets will be acknowledged by mail. Tickets for performances already past cannot be considered as a donation.

**Wheelchair Access:** The Stage Door, Theatre on the Square, and The Orpheum are accessible to persons in wheelchairs.

**Sennheiser Listening System** is designed to provide clear amplified sound anywhere in the auditorium. Headsets are available free-of-charge in the lobby before performance.

**Photographs and Recordings** of A.C.T. performances are strictly forbidden.

**Smoking** is not permitted in the auditorium.

**Beepers!** If you carry a pager, beeper, watch or alarm, please make sure that it is set to the "off" position while you are in the theater to avoid disturbing the performance. Alternately, you may leave it with the House Manager, along with your seat number, so you can be notified if you are called.

### SPECIAL PROGRAMS

**A.C.T. Prologues** are presented before the Tuesday evening Previews for all productions, except *A Christmas Carol*, from 5:30 pm to 6:30 pm. Doors open at 5:00 pm. Please check your tickets for the appropriate theater's location.

**Tuesday Conversations:** These after-show talks are informative discussions concerning issues and ideas surrounding the evening's play. Tuesday evening programs will have special inserts describing the speaker and topics for that evening. The Conversations, moderated by A.C.T. Associate Artistic Directors, are free-of-charge and are open to everyone.

**School Matinees:** 1:00 pm matinees are offered to elementary, secondary, and college groups. Thousands of students attend these performances each season. Tickets are specially priced at just \$8. For more information please call Katherine Spielmann, Student Matinee Coordinator at 749-2230.

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### A.C.T. Venues: ORPHEUM THEATRE

The Orpheum Theatre is located on Market Street at Eighth, near the Civic Center BART/MUNI Station.

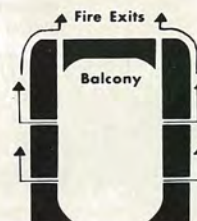
### THE STAGE DOOR THEATRE

The Stage Door is located at 420 Mason Street at Geary, one block from Union Square.

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# To Give and To Receive

*Some of the best shopping destinations and gifts in California*

On the top of everyone's wish list for the holidays are two revered commodities: Time and money. At no other time of the year do these two elements cross paths so frequently and with such intensity. This year, we've put together a shopping list for you of some of the best shops California has to offer. This will help to save you time, at least. After all, money's only money.

South Coast Plaza is a shopper's paradise. There are over 300 shops in one location, with hotels, restaurants, and theaters within walking distance. Many shops, including Calvin Klein, Barney's New York, J. Crew, The Body Shop, Emporio Armani and Liz Claiborne are exclusives to the center, while others, including Gucci, I. Magnin, Ralph Lauren Polo, Jaeger, Yves Saint Laurent Rive Gauche and Aide Grey, rival Rodeo Drive for consumer pleasure.

On a holiday scouting trip, we spotted more than a few "must have" items. At Barney's, the jewelry cases are filled with modern and antique pieces that are mainly exclusive to the stylish New York store. Miriam Haskell's collection is made from the late designers own models and brought up-to-date with current stones, pearls, and metal finishes. Gabrielle Sanchez, Kazuko, and Linda Lee Johnson are among the contemporary jewelers. Their Hermes department is a well-edited selection of the finest items from this European master of leather goods. When browsing through you will find colorful and unique, often handmade gifts for the

home and office — and there are great clothes for children.

Not far away is Giorgio Armani's newest



entry, Emporio Armani, which houses the minimalist designer's trendier, less expensive collection for men and women. Here, one can buy Armani shampoo, underwear, children's clothes, shoes, have

some pasta, and get outfitted for casual and black tie festivities.

For pure elegance and simplicity, Calvin Klein's store is it. Offering both Calvin Klein sport and the designer collection, the colors will soothe your soul. Calvin's beaded evening slips would be a welcome addition to anyone's holiday wardrobe.

And these are just a few of the speciality store finds. Bullock's has opened a separate men's store with all the best designers. Nordstrom stands alone in selection and service. Saks Fifth Avenue can always be counted on for something special. And Robinson's which anchor's the Crystal Court plays host to three more floors of stores.

Moving up the coast, no shopping trip is complete without Beverly Hills. The newly restored Regent Beverly Wilshire Hotel is a shoppers retreat, with their complete health spa, exercise facilities, beauty and massage services. Within the hotel, you'll find wonderful restaurants, Buccellati jewelers, and a just-opened Escada boutique which shows off Margaretha Ley's complete concept of sportswear, business attire, eveningwear, accessories, and fragrances.

Along Wilshire Boulevard, one can dart in and out of major style icons. Gumps, which has everything for the home, also has a unique collection on international holiday decorations. Neiman Marcus has recently opened a new men's department on the top floor for atmosphere and gracious service. Skipping through the golden Triangle reads like a who's who of fashion cognoscenti: Giorgio Armani, Gianni Versace, Claude Montana, Prada, Gucci, Fred Hayman, Bijan, Ralph Lauren/Polo, Chanel, Gianfranco Ferre, Etro, and

*Barbara Foley, former west coast fashion editor of Women's Wear Daily and W, is fashion editor of Performing Arts magazine and writes frequently for the Los Angeles Times magazine.*

Top: From Tiffany's, San Francisco, South Coast Plaza and Beverly Hills: Elsa Peretti's silver soup tureen, and 26" 9mm pearls.  
Above: From Lucy Zahran, South Coast Plaza and The Beverly Center: Italian sterling silver and enamel boxes.

by Barbara Foley

PHOTOGRAPHS: DUSTIN PITTMAN



Tiffany's — and that's before lunch.

Los Angeles also has some hidden favorite shopping haunts: Montana Avenue in Santa Monica, with its selection of cozy furnishings for the home, Shabby Chic, Nonesuch, and Hemisphere for starters, and casual life-style clothes, including ABS, Sara and Sara for Kids. Main Street, also in Santa Monica, hails a collection of California designers including Leon Max for clothing, Stems for gifts and the Functional Gallery of Art for at-home art that's esthetically pleasing while it works.

Melrose, in West Hollywood, is another serendipitous place for finding the unusual.

Atmosphere, Lucy Zahran, and FAO Schwarz represent the fine caliber of specialty stores.

If you like your shopping outdoors, Century City Shopping Center and Marketplace is a healthy spot. Go Sport has one of the most complete sports gear selections in the city. Brentanos is an irresistible, book browser's haven. Great men's stores include Politix, Rosenthal and Truitt, and Brooks Brothers.

Last stop, San Francisco, where Union Square meets Sutter Street and a world of fashion coincides. Gumps started out here. So did I. Magnin and Wilkes Bash-

ford. More recently, by S.F. standards, Neiman Marcus and Saks Fifth Avenue have filled up the square. Not far away on Market Street, Nordstrom presides over several floors of indoor stores. And a walk down Maiden Lane will take you to Ralph Davies where designer names including Issey Miyake and Romeo Gigli, abound. A new area for specialty stores on Fillmore Street is rivaling Union Street, and even more out-of-the-mainstream is Flush, an everything-store south of Market Street and the brainchild of Rosemary Klheban interior designer Chuck Winslow.

Wherever you shop, take a little time and enjoy the magical creativity of the season. □

*At Left: From Gumps, San Francisco and Beverly Hills: assorted brocade and antique tapestry pillows with a 12mm amethyst bead necklace. The Gund teddy bears are at FAO Schwarz, The Beverly Center.*

*Below: From Barney's New York, South Coast Plaza: Hermes Kelly Bag in black calfskin.*

*Bottom left: From Etro at Two Rodeo Drive: A wool handloomed scarf, a briefcase, dopp kit and slippers in their signature paisley.*

*Bottom right: From Stems, Main Street, Santa Monica: jewel-colored ceramic bowls.*



Anchor stores including L.A. Eyeworks, Maxfield, and W represent cutting edge style, while others capture the trends almost before they happen. Heading east, turn the corner on La Brea and feast on the well-chosen fantasies at Replica, Jennifer Joanou, Repeat Performance, Patina, and American Rag.

Not far away is The Beverly Center, where lines never cease for Peter Morton's Hard Rock Cafe. The Gap, Bullock's, and The Broadway have some of their best stores here, while Traffic, Chanins,





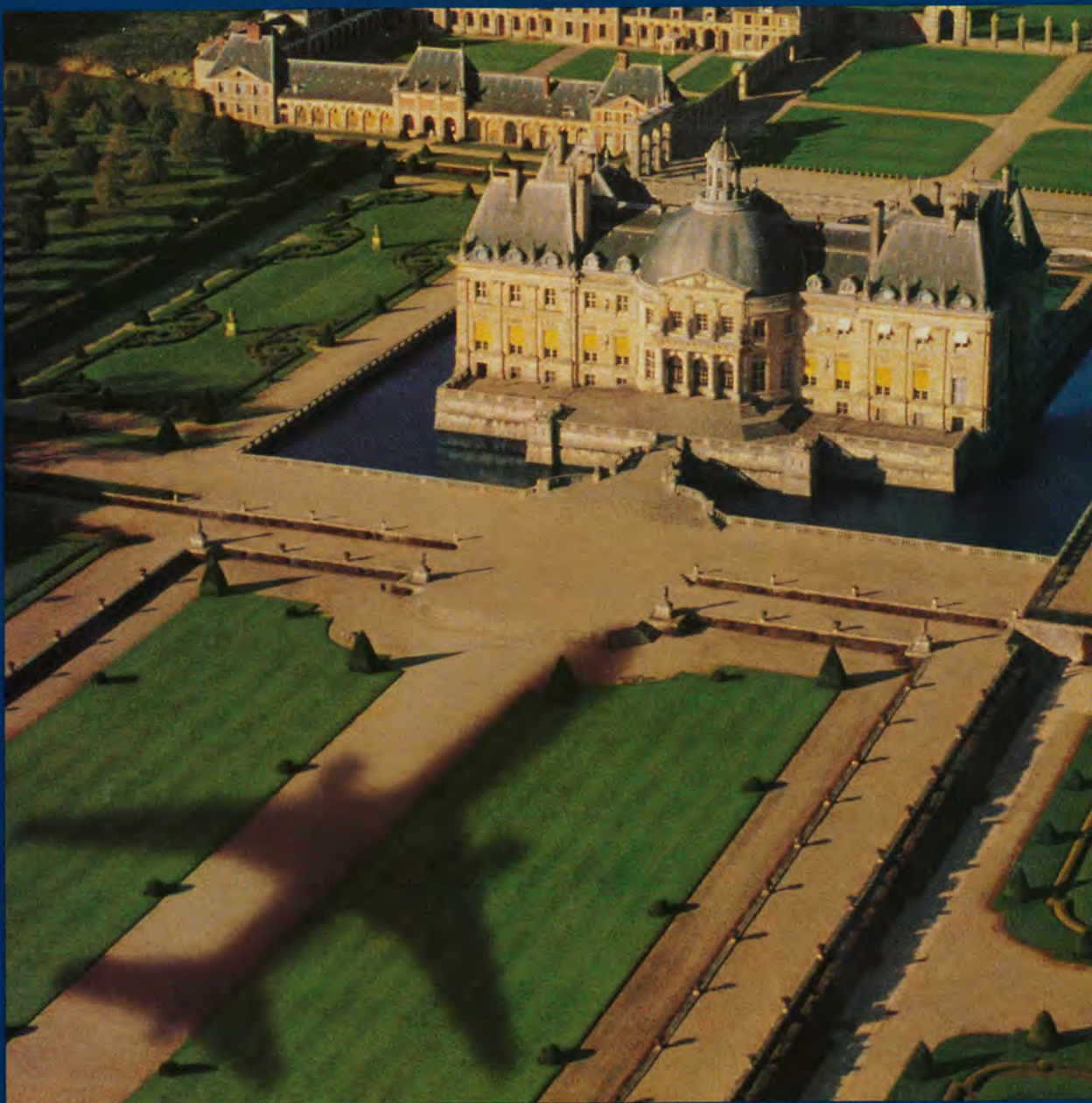


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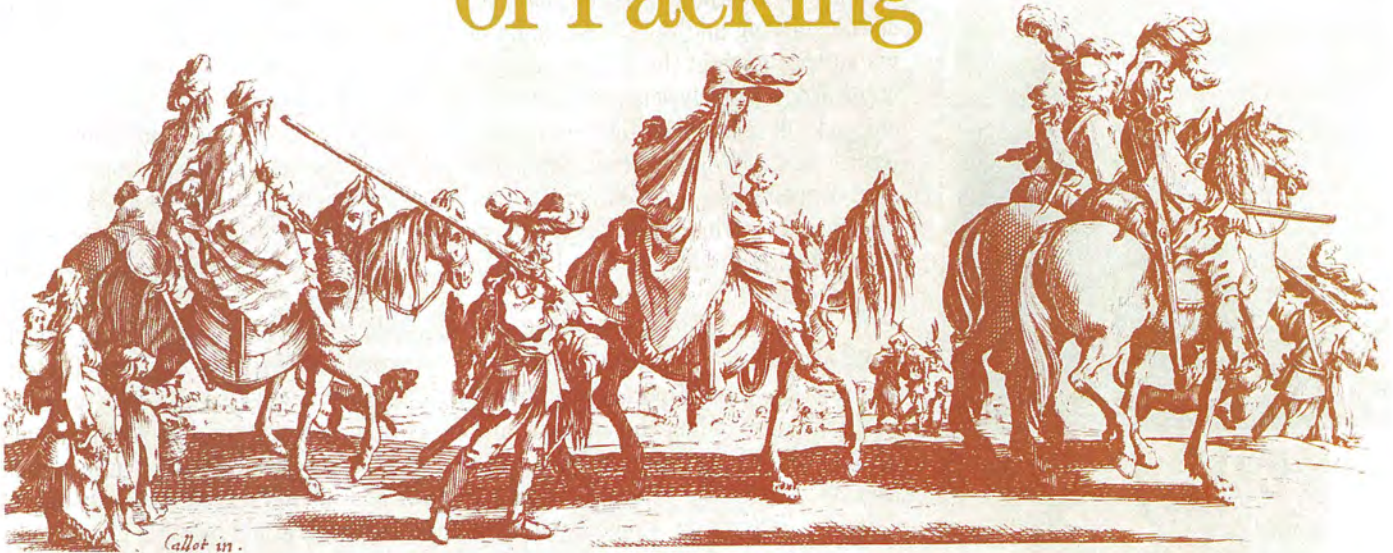
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## ON TRAVEL

# A Short History of Packing



**P**rimitive man didn't pack. Once he'd exhausted the food and clothing supply in his immediate vicinity, he merely strolled through the wilderness until he met another woolly mammoth. Dressing for dinner was simple. He ate the inside and wore the outside. Matters didn't change significantly for millennia. Even at the absolute pinnacle of ancient civilization, people tended to stay put, enjoying the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome. The notion that other societies might offer novel opportunities for diversion didn't occur to them. Life was too short — thirty-five years was the average span — to include much time for travel. There were no retirees. Work, as such, had not yet been invented. The Greeks and Romans felt, with reason, that they already lived in the best of all possible worlds. When the Visi-, Ostro-, and other

assorted Goths eventually sacked Rome, they didn't pack for the trip either, unless you call carrying a bludgeon and a spear packing. Savage as they were, the vandals knew they could get everything they needed once they arrived at their destination. That, in fact, is why they embarked upon the adventure in the first place. The Goths were vicious, cruel and barbaric, but they weren't foolish.

There may have been some rudimentary packing during the Crusades, but by and large the crusaders wore all their clothes, saving space in their saddle bags for food and ammunition. Journeying by horseback, in chain mail underwear and full metal jacket, trousers, gloves and helmet, restricts you to the essentials. Armor doesn't fold. Medieval women, who were somewhat more fastidious than the men and likely to change clothes every year or so, were left behind under circumstances that virtually guaranteed they wouldn't stray far from the castle keep. All a knight errant needed on his tour was a love poem and a lance. Everything

else was supplied by his hostess.

Once the Renaissance dawned, the descendants of the crusaders were so consumed with making up for lost time that their trips were necessarily short — business trips, really, to pick up commissions for mosaics, bronze doors, and altarpieces. Usually, the artists began from a place that offered relatively nothing and ended up in a city that had everything, comparatively speaking. Why pack if you're going from the benighted hamlet where you were born to Rome, Florence, or Siena? You'd only look like a bumpkin among the city folk.

There matters happily rested until the early nineteenth century, when the invention of the steam engine abruptly changed the status quo. From that point on, unprecedented numbers of people began going from one place to another by boat and train, methods that provided space for amounts of luggage undreamed of in the era of stagecoaches and sailing ships. Aggravating the situation, the industrial revolution had supplied whole

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*Elaine Kendall is an author, journalist and playwright who writes frequently on travel and the arts.*

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*Tourists have always been a motley lot — particularly to locals. Above: Jacques Callot's Les Bohémiens en Voyage, c. 1621. The cynical inscription reads: "Are these not fine messengers, straying through foreign lands?"*

by Elaine Kendall



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new categories of possessions to whole new categories of people, and within a few decades, even ordinary folk owned more than the clothes on their backs and a change for Sunday. For the first time in recorded history, people began traveling for pleasure, to show off their acquisitions to friends and enemies. Until then, travelers were either explorers, warriors, or the starving and oppressed, none of whom had much in the way of movable goods. The relatively small numbers who enjoyed an agreeable life — nobles, mostly — stayed home. Here, emigrants used covered wagons, which were houses. They held everything. You see their heirs today, tooling around in RVs, living in their luggage to avoid carrying it.

By the late nineteenth century, the world had entered the golden age of packing, a short, blissful period that would end irrevocably when the airplane supplanted the ship and train, putting us all back to square one. Without dwelling morbidly upon the differences, think of the steamer trunk. Though some have been restored and reincarnated as occasional tables, few contemporary Americans have ever actually seen one open and in use — one side fitted out with a dozen sturdy wooden hangers and a shoe rack; the other neatly divided into drawers for gloves, hosiery, shirts, and what were then politely called 'small clothes.' Of all the wondrous Victorian inventions, nothing but the indoor water closet so enhanced the general quality of life. The steamer trunk was armoire and dresser in one. What wouldn't fit in that could go into an ordinary trunk; a handsome accessory solidly built of wood and covered with fine leather, spacious enough for morning coats and crinolines, with a removable tray for silver-backed brushes. Hats traveled separately, in round boxes tailored to their shapes, and no real lady or gentleman would leave home without a portable desk and a bookcase, which often matched. Packing for nineteenth century travelers was merely a matter of transferring their belongings from one spacious place to another. The only hard part was deciding which ball gown to leave behind and how many top hats a chap might need on the Grand Tour. When the choice was

impossible, one simply took another trunk or two, to be marked Not Wanted On Voyage and stowed below, or better still, Port Outward, Starboard Home, POSH in neatly stencilled letters.

Though relatively few enjoyed such luxury, that didn't worry the fortunate, and it shouldn't worry us. On arrival, the luggage would be hauled around by beasts of burden — horses, donkeys, and in some parts of the world, oxen. When human beings took on this job, they were paid for it; poorly, but paid. Even Third Class in the heyday of transatlantic travel was considerably more commodious than a seat on the Concorde today. Steerage passengers were crowded, but they weren't strapped down, though steerage had little else to recommend it except price, which was about \$30 from Liverpool to Boston. The density was no worse than on a 747 and the food and sanitary arrangements were comparable. You could actually stretch out and lie down in steerage, though of course there would be other people right next to you, some of whom might be seasick or poor company, but all things considered, the only essential difference between steerage then and economy now is time, and not as much as you might think. Unlike their counterparts today, people who traveled steerage weren't loaded down with color TVs, microwave ovens and seven-foot plush pandas. On their way to a new life in the new world, they either left their pitifully few possessions behind or sold them to raise the fare, carrying the insignificant remainder in sacks made of old rugs. Those were carpet bags, the precursors of carry-ons, and they hadn't been in use for a week before they acquired a bad name.

Eventually the carpet-baggers were run out of town, but their luggage lingered on, resurfacing a few decades later as the ValPak. First developed for the military and naively hailed as a brilliant innovation, the ValPak was made of fabric far less attractive than old Kilims. Designed to bend clothing in half during the journey, the bag was supposed to be unhooked and slung over a closet bar upon arrival, whereupon the contents would presumably "hang out," eliminating the need for either unpacking or pressing. Unhappily, even officers in tip-





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top condition seldom succeeded in getting the bag onto the bar, at least not on the first try. Never meant to withstand such onslaughts, the closet bars usually broke, leaving the owner's possessions in far worse condition than they would have been rolled up and stuffed into a duffel, but then the distinction between officers and other ranks would have been blurred. Amazingly, the civilian public embraced these bags with enthusiasm, though they instantly abandoned other wartime make-shifts like tuna wiggle and leg paint.

The two-suiter quickly became fancier, heavier, and longer, developing bulges of various sizes all over itself; becoming a



*In appearance, today's abused traveler may differ little from Callot's Les Gueux, c. 1622-23.*

limp steamer trunk with the storage on the exterior to make life easier for thieves. Unlike the drawers in a steamer trunk, which were versatile, the pockets on the carry-on were highly specialized. There is always an oblong one, an inch and a half deep, ostensibly meant to hold shirts, provided they came back from the laundry folded to those precise dimensions. Mostly it's hit and miss; collars crumpled, sleeves caught in the zip, but even if you managed to get your clean shirts into the designated space, the only way to get them back after they're worn is to put them into a trash compacter first. Once exposed to air, clothing attracts trillions



of extra molecules; a fact that explains why laundry takes up twice as much room as it did before. The shoe pocket works only if you wear a man's size eight to ten. If your shoes are smaller, there's room for one more, and if they're bigger, the pocket is completely useless. Nothing else in a person's wardrobe is shoe-shaped. Furthermore, the two- or four-suiter turns the bearer into his own beast of burden, a problem the manufacturers have lately attempted to solve by attaching wheels, which is like putting skates on a rag doll. The newest and most expensive models have an intricate plastic system which turns them into a luggage cart, at least until the gadget breaks from strain and the inability of most people — even CEOs of major companies — to remember how it works. To all intents and purposes, "Carry-on" is an oxymoron. Nevertheless, the desire to shorten the wait for luggage is so powerful (equal to thirst, hunger or sex) that people continue to use these bags, making orthopedics the fastest growing medical specialty in the world.

The few who stubbornly rejected these floppy trunks were offered an extreme alternative; suitcases made of a hard metallic substance guaranteed not to dent no matter how brutally treated. Concentrating upon the fact that these bags could be flung from skyscrapers, danced upon by elephants and run over by power mowers, the manufacturers forgot that the contents wouldn't be made of the same material. Totally unforgiving, not even minimally expandable, these containers made no allowance whatever for even the most essential acquisitions, like a pair of sunglasses or a bottle of shampoo. Those who carried them not only looked as if they were travelling with a roast turkey, but were forced to take along a tote (carpet) bag to accommodate the overflow, because these new cases would demolish anything made of glass, metal, plastic or even leather, while remaining intact themselves, exactly as guaranteed. With the advent of this invention, the brief Golden Age was irrevocably over, its last pathetic gasp the wagon meant to let you wheel your fifty pound carry-on at least part of the way. Once offered free, these carts now cost \$1.50, to be inserted

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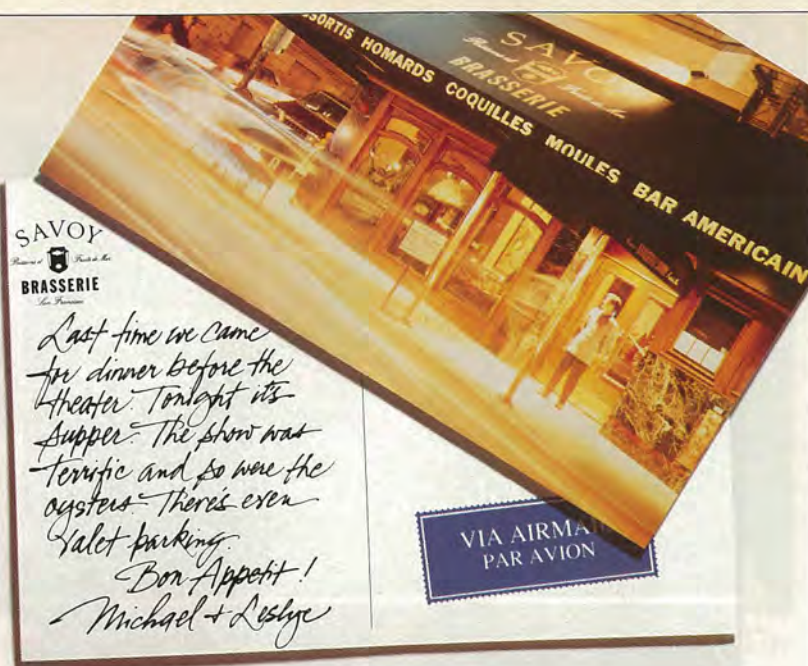
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according to strict protocol, and of course, in the coin and notes of the country in which you've arrived after banking hours. But even if one has crisp bills and exact change, the machine is seldom gratified, showing its displeasure by spitting them out or shredding them. The most sullen porters seldom did that.

The only, if somewhat extravagant, way to avoid packing and its attendant hardship is to buy a second home, an alternative millions of Americans have chosen, justifying the expense as "an investment." Naturally, they're reluctant to admit that they purchased an entire condo only to get a closet and a place to store an extra set of golf clubs or skis, which, like the crusader's armor, can't be folded. (We've made virtually no progress in packing since the middle ages. The condo is a contemporary version of Byzantium — somewhere to store the things you need away from home; equally expensive, soon redundant, and devilishly hard to maintain at a distance.) Worse still, it fails. Heavy winter clothes left in the ski condo develop moth holes. Bathing suits and light summer things abandoned at the beach lose their elastic and acquire yellow spots of unknown origin, resistant to all known solvents. Sooner or later, you'll have to pack again, and when that happens, it's time to sell the second house.

Some people have avoided packing (much) by taking virtually nothing and buying all new clothes on arrival, a deceptively tempting method if you're going to the great European capitals, but altogether impractical if your destination is somewhere more remote or deprived, like Papua or Leningrad. Before you take this way out, take a moment to consider why the Japanese do all their shopping here. Remember too, that Italian men have twenty-eight inch waists, that European shoes don't come in widths, but get wider as they get longer, and that all seasonal clothes vanish completely from foreign shops in January 1, March 1, July 1 and September 1, regardless of the actual weather. On a hot fall day in Paris, when the thermometer reads 30 Celsius, the shops have nothing but mohair and sheepskin. It's *l'hiver* in the *vitrines*, though it's *l'été* on the sidewalk. Everything you've ever heard in song and story



about Paris in spring is true, provided you've remembered a down parka.

An increasingly popular option doesn't entirely eliminate packing, but simplifies it. According to this theory, you take your oldest clothes and discard them along the way. While you may look shabby, you won't look that much worse than someone whose new clothes have just emerged from a two-suit, and you'll be absolutely elegant in comparison to those unfortunates whose baggage was lost. Though this method has some distinct advantages, it's inflexible, allowing for no changes of schedule or unforeseen delays. Still, when you get home, weary, jet-lagged and impoverished, you don't have to unpack (much) and your good clothes will still be usable.

A special variation of the old clothes option is wearing as much as possible *en route*, a system popular among the wives and daughters of Middle Eastern potentates. They travel in layers of French *haute couture* under their chadoors, not only obviating packing but avoiding customs duty, since no customs inspector, in this unsettled world and in his right mind, would dare ask anyone from the Gulf states to lift her veil. Sadly, there's not much an American can glean from this ingenious approach, unless he or she doesn't mind looking like the Stay-Puft Marshmallow man.

There is no one who doesn't have to pack, sometime. Your mother packs to go to the hospital to have you; you have a diaper bag from that moment on, and packing is the last thing your survivors do for you in this world. In between, there's a lot of it. Even heads of state must pack — how else can they be ready for photo opportunities? Can they totter off the plane in rumpled sweat suits as if the world were nothing but a branch of their neighborhood gym? That's how America lost its once proud place in the pantheon of nations. Most of us don't look respectable when we travel. We've given up. Bring back the steamer trunk, and our star will rise again. Strike 'drip dry,' 'carry-on,' and 'all purpose' from the travel lexicon. They're synonyms for sleazy, back-breaking, and inappropriate. As for 'carousel,' give it back to the circus, where it belongs. □

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**ENOTECA LANZONE**, Opera Plaza — 601 Van Ness (415/928-0400). L 11:30 AM-2:30 PM Mon-Fri, D 5:00 PM-10:30 PM Mon-Fri, D 5:00 PM-11:00 PM Sat & Sun. Food of Italian heritage. Artistic banquet events. Reservations accepted. AE DC CB V MC Airplus, JCB

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## GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Continued from page 8

either you leave altogether or start it on your own."

*Greek*, according to Joel Mullennix, has "more of a through-line than *East*, but has the same sort of poetic language. Berkoff uses the violence of Cockney language, but it's not a voyeuristic violence. It's ugly and upsetting, but it's fresh, it makes one face violence afresh. In deliberately choosing the most reprehensible thing you can face, you're left with the pure experience. And in that there is some redemption." Set in a Cockney world from which Oedipus — Eddie in the play — rises until his inevitable fall, this revisionary view of the Oedipus myth proposes that it's better to crawl back into the womb, as Oedipus inadvertently does in marrying his mother, than "to stick a bomb up someone's ass and get a medal for it." In a world where "Maggot Scratcher" — Cockney rhyming slang for Margaret Thatcher — reigns and a mysterious plague is raging, an honest sexuality is salvation.

"In *East*, sex was violence. Here it's against the violence," MacDougall notes. As in *East*, the love scenes are unsettlingly frank, yet Berkoff's sweeping candor is always exhilarating. *January 22-February 28. Magic Theatre, Building B, Fort Mason. (415) 441-8001.*

## IN BRIEF

**Theater:** American Conservatory Theater revives Edmond Rostand's master-

piece of romantic love, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, in a new production. January 21-March 14, Theatre on the Square. (415) 749-2ACT . . . **Man of La Mancha**, starring Raul Julia as Don Quixote and Sheena Easton as Aldonza, opens in January at the Orpheum; call Best of Broadway, (415) 474-3800 . . . **Dance:** Margie Gillis, the Canadian soloist whose performances are marked by daring physicality and acute psychological insight, now appears with her brother, Christopher Gillis, of the Paul Taylor Dance Company; this is the dance event not to miss. January 16 at Herbst Theatre; call San Francisco Performances, (415) 398-6449 . . . **Music:** The Minnesota Orchestra, conducted by San Francisco Symphony's former artistic director, Edo de Waart, appears on San Francisco Symphony's Mercedes Great Performers Series. The featured soloist in Berg's Violin Concerto is Nigel Kennedy, notorious to some for his sprightly punkish haircut and outre choice of footgear; his profound musicality is what you want to hear. January 26 at Davies Symphony Hall. (415) 431-5400 . . . **Art:** Calum Colvin: *The Two Ways of Art*, a complex photographic installation by the contemporary Scottish artist, who has fashioned a fantastic adventure for his toy sailor-hero, a kilted Action Man doll who crosses the geographic wilderness of Scotland's stereotypes, idols and moral confusions. January 10-March 15. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. (415) 863-8800. □



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THE LAST WORD

# Clothes Make the Woman



**S**arah Bernhardt was fifty-five years old when her performance as Hamlet was received with immense enthusiasm in Paris and embarrassment in England. She played the melancholy Dane in an oversized yellow wig, trailing a cloak from one shoulder draped around her furlined doublet and inky tights: one reviewer had the impression of watching a mosquito under a microscope. Max Beerbohm, calling her "the Princess of Denmark," wrote of the iron control he and the audience had to exercise to keep from exploding into laughter.

The Divine Sarah had played male characters throughout her career. Soon after Hamlet she undertook the role of her life, the Duke of Reichstadt in Edmond Rostand's *L'Aiglon*, playing a

sickly youth who had died at twenty. Questioned once if she actually preferred playing men, Bernhardt explained: "it is not the male roles, but the male brains that I prefer."

Not long after women entered the acting profession in seventeenth century England, they realized that men still had the advantage with many better and longer roles written for them. Shakespeare may have created Lady Macbeth and Ophelia (to be performed by boy actors, of course), but Othello and Iago, not to mention Hamlet or Lear, required infinitely greater subtlety, virtuosity, and range. Women gradually moved in on such roles as ambiguous gender as Puck and Ariel; when Kenneth Branagh recently cast an actress as Lear's Fool, he was following precedent as far back as Priscilla Horton's performance in 1838.

A generation before Bernhardt, the first

*Peter Hay's latest book, MGM: When the Lion Roars, has just appeared from Turner Publishing.*

Above: Ellen Terry, aged eight, as Puck in Charles Kean's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, 1856.

by Peter Hay

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great American actress, Charlotte Cushman, tackled parts like Macbeth and Cardinal Wolsey; she conquered London in the part of Romeo which she played opposite her sister's Juliet. "There is no trick in Miss Cushman's performance," wrote the English playwright Sheridan Knowles, an instant convert; "no thought, no interest, no feeling seems to actuate her, except what might be looked for in Romeo himself were Romeo reality."

Many great stars, from Mrs. Siddons to Dame Judith Anderson, have played Hamlet; but such virtuoso performances became curiosities rather than creative interpretations of the role, even though critics scribbled earnestly about the feminine side of Hamlet's character. During the First World War, with many young men overseas, Sybill Thorndike often played men at the Old Vic. However, this practice had nothing to do with the vogue for male impersonators, then reaching its height.

Women dressed as men, for the sake of the clothes rather than the role, had its origins in the so-called "breeches" parts of Restoration comedy, and especially eighteenth century opera, with women taking the parts of *castrato* singers whenever the genuine article was in short supply. In the theater, transvestism purposely revealed the shape of the female form, especially when either morality or fashion prevented even an ankle to be shown.

Another influence behind male impersonation came from English pantomime, where the Principal Boy has always been a breeches part, requiring, in the words of one writer, "a good pair of legs." This is how Vesta Tilley began as a child, before conquering the English music halls and then the vaudeville circuits in America with her impersonations of male characters ranging from dandies to policemen.

"When a woman disguises herself as a man," wrote Roger Baker in *Drag*, one of the few books on female impersonation in the theater, "she is accentuating her own sex appeal, whereas a man dressing up as a woman debases or annihilates his own sexual character." Although Tilley spent hours trying to hide her curves, her femininity titillated because her clothes allowed her to do things — such

as smoke cigars — forbidden to respectable women.

Publicists emphasized Tilley's normal family life and feminine side to make sure that her image would not be confused with "mannish women," as lesbians were called. Similarly Julian Eltinge, the leading female impersonator of the age, was always depicted offstage as a man's man. Consequently, the majority of Eltinge fans were women, while men idolized Vesta Tilley. She also made a great impact on fashion: young Edwardian gentlemen, especially those returning after a few years in the colonies, flocked to the Empire on Leicester Square to learn from Vesta Tilley about the latest Saville Row fashions.

One night in New York, she wrote in her recollections, "I rushed off stage to make the change from an Eton boy to a Dude — and to my horror found that my maid had forgotten to put cuff links in the cuffs of my shirt. The band was playing the introduction to the song — the links could not be found! I snatched a bit of black ribbon which my maid was wearing in her hair, and hastily tied the cuffs together with a black ribbon bow. Shortly afterwards a leading firm of gentlemen's hosiers, on Broadway, were exhibiting cuff links in the form of a black ribbon bow, as the very latest fashion in London . . ."

Vesta Tilley had many imitators on both sides of the Atlantic; one of them, Kathleen Clifford, was described as the "smartest dressed *man* on the American stage." But the vogue went beyond fads and fashion. It coincided with women's emancipation from doll's clothes and into practical work attire; when the vote and other freedoms were won, male impersonation declined.

The prepubescent Peter Pan is perhaps the only true breeches part left in the repertory; otherwise, actresses dress up in men's clothes only when a part requires it, as Garbo did in her favorite role of Queen Christina, or Barbra Streisand in *Yentl*.

Male and female impersonation have roots deep in both the theater and in social taboos. The fascination comes from magical transformation through the art of illusion. Its appeal lies in the pursuit of impossible dreams. □



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